

## STATEMENT

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### ***Nation's Public-Private Partnership for Suicide Prevention Announces Private Sector Successor***

*Leadership succession announced as the U.S. grapples with continuing mental health and suicide-related challenges in the wake of the pandemic and prepares for the July transition to 988 as first-ever three-digit line for mental health and suicide crises*

**WASHINGTON, DC (May 18, 2022)**—The [National Action Alliance for Suicide Prevention](#) (Action Alliance), the nation's leading public-private partnership driving implementation of the [National Strategy for Suicide Prevention](#), announced the retirement of Robert Turner as the private sector chair and the appointment of Craig Kramer as his successor. Kramer, Mental Health Ambassador, Janssen Research & Development, LLC, part of the Janssen Pharmaceutical Companies of Johnson & Johnson, joins the public sector chair, Dr. Carolyn Clancy, Assistant Undersecretary for Health, Discovery, Education, and Affiliate Networks with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, in leading the strategic direction of the organization as it works across sectors to restore hope and save lives.

"I am thrilled to welcome Craig as the private sector chair and look forward to working alongside him to further establish suicide prevention as a national priority," said Dr. Clancy. "We know that leading public health issues, like suicide, require a comprehensive public health response from both the public and private sectors. If we are to make real, sustainable progress, we need all sectors to work together to achieve impact.

Since 2018, Kramer has served as an Action Alliance Executive Committee member and, in 2020, led establishment of the Action Alliance's [Measurement & Accountability Work Group](#), which is tasked with identifying measurable outcomes to indicate progress in meeting the Action Alliance's objectives. In addition, Kramer has been an [outspoken advocate](#) in sharing his family's own journey with suicidality and the importance and fidelity of the Action Alliance's [Best Practices in Care Transitions](#) guidance.

Regarding his new role as private sector chair of the Action Alliance, Kramer states: "I am grateful for the opportunity to work with Dr. Clancy and the other members and partners of the Action Alliance to build on Bob Turner's legacy at this critical juncture in our efforts to prevent suicide. The pandemic has shined the light on the gaps in our health system and exacerbated the pre-existing mental health crisis. This heightened awareness gives us an historic opening to profoundly change the trajectory of mental health for humanity. My focus on the Action Alliance has been and will continue to be setting clear, realistic priorities and holding ourselves accountable for achieving results, not just conducting activities, while

enhancing the role of diverse people with lived experience in our decision-making process. That's the only way we can advance this critical and complex mission."

Kramer takes over for outgoing private sector chair, Bob Turner, a retired Senior Vice President at Union Pacific who has served in the role since 2014. During his time as private sector chair, Turner oversaw the release of the nation's only [Recommended Standard Care for People with Suicide Risk](#), the launch of the [Faith.Hope.Life. campaign](#) for faith communities, the first ever [American Indian and Alaska Native Hope for Life Day](#) to promote suicide prevention, development of national guidance for [comprehensive community-based suicide prevention](#), the release of one-of-a-kind collective [recommendations for the entertainment industry around depicting suicide](#), and much more. In addition, Turner led an unprecedented effort to bring more private sector organizations and senior leaders to the table to spur meaningful and measurable change.

"I am thankful for my time leading the Action Alliance and the opportunity to position it as a true example of the power of diverse sectors working together towards a common goal," said Turner. "The private sector, especially, has the unique opportunity to bring innovative solutions to national suicide prevention efforts and, through the Action Alliance, to play a leading role in identifying sustainable and scalable solutions. As I pass the baton to Craig, I am confident that his professional and personal knowledge and experience, along with his energy and passion, are exactly what's needed to continue to make advancements and save more lives."

While suicide rates rose nearly [30 percent](#) between 1999 and 2018 according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), nationwide suicide rates [declined](#) slightly in 2019 and 2020, the latest years for final mortality data. However, that does not tell the full story and a short decline does not necessarily indicate a downward trend as rates have continued to increase in certain populations and the full, long-term effect of the COVID-19 pandemic on mental health remains unknown. By bringing together senior leaders from many sectors, the Action Alliance is uniquely positioned to identify and implement national, systems-level solutions needed to achieve progress and lasting change in mental health and suicide prevention. The Action Alliance includes large employers and corporations (e.g., American Express, Union Pacific Rail, Johnson & Johnson), federal agencies (e.g., CDC, the U.S. Department of Defense, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, and the National Institute of Mental Health), national non-profits (e.g., American Foundation for Suicide Prevention, The Trevor Project), cultural influencers (e.g., Facebook, Paramount), and major health care systems (e.g., Kaiser Permanente, Universal Health Services).

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#### **FOR MEDIA PARTNERS:**

Research shows that the media may influence suicide rates by the way they report on suicide. Evidence suggests that when the media tell stories of people positively coping in suicidal moments, more suicides can be prevented. We urge all members of the media working on these stories to refer to the [Recommendations for Reporting on Suicide](#) for best practices for safely and accurately reporting on suicide (such as including the [National Suicide Prevention Lifeline 800-273-TALK \[8255\]](#)). For stories of persons with lived experience of suicidality and finding hope, refer to [www.lifelineforattempt survivors.org](http://www.lifelineforattempt survivors.org). For reporters covering 988 related stories, please utilize [988 reporting guidance](#) for how to effectively report about this upcoming transition.

#### **NATIONAL ACTION ALLIANCE FOR SUICIDE PREVENTION:**

The [National Action Alliance for Suicide Prevention](#) (Action Alliance) is the public-private partnership working to advance the [National Strategy for Suicide Prevention](#) and make suicide prevention a national priority. The

*[Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration](#), through the [Suicide Prevention Resource Center](#) grant, provides funding to Education Development Center ([EDC](#)) to operate and manage the Secretariat for the Action Alliance, which was launched in 2010. Learn more at [theactionalliance.org](http://theactionalliance.org) and join the conversation on suicide prevention by following the Action Alliance on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [LinkedIn](#), and [YouTube](#).*

**MENTAL HEALTH & SUICIDE PREVENTION NATIONAL RESPONSE TO COVID-19:**

*The [Mental Health & Suicide Prevention National Response to COVID-19](#) (National Response) is a dynamic, diverse, nonpartisan group of leading public and private sector organizations that are committed to driving meaningful, lasting change through collaboration, leadership, and action. As an initiative of the Action Alliance, the National Response is the unifying national voice and galvanizing force for accelerating actionable solutions to strengthen mental health, suicide prevention, and resilience for all Americans.*