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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

June 15, 2009

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**NATIONAL MEN'S HEALTH WEEK PROVIDES OPPORTUNITY TO RECOGNIZE  
MENTAL HEALTH AS A VITAL PART OF OVERALL HEALTH**

*Alabama Department of Mental Health encourages men to get more information*

MONTGOMERY – The Alabama Department of Mental Health (ALDMH) is encouraging men to seek out information about mental health as part of National Men's Health Week, which will run from Jun 15-21, symbolically ending on Father's Day. Although the observance, sponsored by the National Men's Health Network, is dedicated to educating the public about the detection, treatment, and prevention of health problems that can affect boys and men, there is a new national focus on mental health as a vital part of overall health and well being. Because of this, ALDMH Commissioner John Houston said, "We are encouraging boys and men to learn more about their mental health and to visit a doctor if they are feeling stressed out or not themselves. Mental health disorders, including mental illnesses, are among the most treatable forms of illness. There is an abundance of resources available about men's health, particularly mental health, and we urge them to get that information."

One such resource available from the ALDMH is *The Legacy of Charley Pell*. This 17-minute documentary focuses on the life of Coach Pell, his struggle with depression, and his recovery from a mental illness. Essentially, the film teaches that mental illness is not a sign of weakness, but a biological brain disease that is treatable and manageable. It is an illness that has a greater success rate of recovery than all other major illness combined. This national award winning film has been a popular resource for combating the stigma against mental illness in high school and college students. The documentary is available for viewing and/or downloading at the department's website at [www.mh.alabama.gov/video/LegacyOfCharleyPell.aspx](http://www.mh.alabama.gov/video/LegacyOfCharleyPell.aspx).

Another timely and valuable resource available at the department's website is the Reintegration Action Plan (RAP), which is designed to ease the transition of veterans and family members from active duty to civilian life. Since September 11, 2001, more than 13,000 Alabama National Guard service members have deployed in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom or Operation Enduring Freedom. Unfortunately, this war, like all wars, has resulted in considerable mental health stress for some of our returning heroes and for their families. Reports of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder and other mental health issues are increasing among returning troops. The RAP is a collection of strategies designed to facilitate successful transition, as well as a resource guide for obtaining professional assistance. The RAP is available on the home page of the department's web site at [www.mh.alabama.gov](http://www.mh.alabama.gov).

In 1994, Congress established National Men's Health Week, which is sponsored by the Men's Health Network. In addition, the weeklong event also provides an opportunity to encourage boys and men to get regular checkups and seek early treatment for illness and injury. According to the National Women's Health Information Center, men live an average of seven years fewer than women and face major health risks that can be prevented or treated successfully if diagnosed early. Men also face serious mental health risks that can worsen rapidly without detection. This problem is compounded by the fact that men consult health professionals nearly 150 percent less often than women.

One in four adults – approximately 57.7 million Americans – experience a mental health disorder in any given year. One of the greatest mental health disorder threats to men is depression. In America alone, more than 6 million men have depression each year. As common as the illness is, it is also one of the most misunderstood. Many believe that depression is just a normal part of life, something one can snap out of. Because of this thought process, and many men's unwillingness to seek treatment, depression is under-diagnosed in men and is a contributing factor to the fact that men are more than four times more likely than women to commit suicide.

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### **RESOURCES**

1. Male Depression: Understanding the Issues – available at <http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/male-depression/MC00041>.
2. Men and Depression - <http://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/depression/men-and-depression/index.shtml>.
3. Your Head: An Owner's Manual: Understanding and Overcoming Depression, Anxiety, and Stress - <http://www.blueprintformenshealth.com/>.
4. Blueprint for Men's Health - <http://www.blueprintformenshealth.com/>.
5. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)'s National Mental Health Information Center - <http://mentalhealth.samhsa.gov/highlights/june2004/menhealth/default.asp>.
6. Information on mental health services in the state of Alabama can be obtained by contacting the ALDMH (334)242-3642 or by visiting us online at [www.mh.alabama.gov](http://www.mh.alabama.gov).