



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **DEPRESSION EDUCATION PROGRAMMING FROM ERIKA'S LIGHTHOUSE CAN FILL THE PRESSING NEED FOR MENTAL HEALTH EDUCATION ACROSS THE COUNTRY**

*A recent poll from John Zogby Strategies found that teens overwhelmingly reported anxiety and depression as key factors for keeping them up at night*

March 3, 2021 – Winnetka, Ill. – [Erika's Lighthouse](#), a non-profit organization that is dedicated to educating and raising awareness about adolescent depression, encouraging good mental health, and breaking down the stigma surrounding mental health issues, announced today that it is uniquely qualified to provide the appropriate resources to meet the mental health challenges that have overcome teens across the country. Teens are in an unprecedented situation caused by the COVID-19 pandemic in which they are unable to partake in some of the formative rites of passage during middle school and high school. Throughout the 2020 – 2021 school year, the free depression education programming from Erika's Lighthouse has been made available for remote learning, hybrid environments, and the traditional classroom setting in middle schools and high schools. Since the beginning of the 2020 school year, the depression education program [has been taught](#) in 327 schools in 37 states and has had a positive impact on more than 158,000 students.

A [recent poll](#), by John Zogby Strategies, found that teens overwhelmingly reported anxiety and depression as key factors for keeping them up at night. Even more concerning was that 56% of students reported that they personally knew someone who considered self-harm or suicide, but less than one third (32%) believed their school was prepared to handle this issue, demonstrating that school leaders need to address social and emotional safety in addition to physical safety.

"Depression literacy, good mental health, and help-seeking behaviors are important skills for teens to understand and use during the pandemic," said Brandon M. Combs, the executive director of Erika's Lighthouse. "Social isolation, disrupted schedules, and general uncertainty have created a challenging environment. Helping our teens speak about their mental health in positive, productive ways is essential."

Erika's Lighthouse is A Beacon of Hope for Adolescent Depression and develops and provides free teen depression awareness programs and resources to middle school and high school communities across the country. Erika's Lighthouse continues to make improvements and make it easier for school partners to access its programs and resources. In 2018, a new website and resource portal was introduced that provides all of Erika's Lighthouse resources in one place, including additional teen empowerment activities.

"In this ongoing pandemic situation, our young people are having significant mental health needs that schools and parents are struggling to address," said Michael Kelly PhD, MSW, Lucian and Carol Welch Matusak Professor, at the Loyola University Chicago School of Social Work. "The programs

and supports offered by Erika's Lighthouse provide excellent tools for schools, youth, and parents to use to help navigate this complex time.”

Additionally, in collaboration with the United Kingdom based [Anna Freud Centre for Children and Families](#), Erika's Lighthouse has developed a new video titled “We All Have Mental Health: A Program for Middle and High School Remote Learners.” This animated video and updated classroom syllabi are available on the free resource portal and was created for stage three secondary school pupils that are between the ages of seven and nine years old. The video was developed in collaboration with young people, teachers, and mental health experts that aims to include consistent and accessible language to talk about mental health, provide students with a better understanding of mental health self-care, and to know who to ask for support when it is needed.

The poll from John Zogby Strategies also found that

- 55% of teens surveyed said they thought more about their physical and emotional safety and wellness compared to six months ago. When looking at teens in large cities, this jumps to 75%.
- Only 36% of teens ages 16-17 reported they know who to call and where to report a threat, less than half (42%) believe their school is doing its best to create an atmosphere of physical and emotional safety.
- Only 55% of teens believed that school leaders thought safety was a priority and only 42% thought schools were spending enough time and money to keep students safe. One-in-three (35%) said they felt the “least safe” in school compared to their home, after-school job, favorite restaurant, or place of worship.

More information on bringing Erika's Lighthouse programs to middle schools and high schools is available at [www.erikaslighthouse.org/contact/](http://www.erikaslighthouse.org/contact/).

### **About Erika's Lighthouse**

Erika's Lighthouse: A Beacon of Hope for Adolescent Depression is a non-profit organization committed to raising awareness about teen depression in middle school and high school communities at no cost to schools. Erika's Lighthouse works to eliminate the stigma surrounding depression and empower young people to take ownership of their mental health. Core programs include the video-based, teacher-led depression awareness classroom programs—The Erika's Lighthouse Program: Depression and Suicide Awareness for High School Students and The Erika's Lighthouse Program: Depression Awareness for Middle School Students. Erika's Lighthouse also provides countless other web-based resources. To learn more, visit [www.erikaslighthouse.org](http://www.erikaslighthouse.org).

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