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For Immediate Release

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Reducing Stigma Around Substance Use and Mental Health Challenges

Southwest Nebraska Public Health Department (SWNPHD) is deepening its commitment to dismantling the stigma that surrounds substance use disorders and mental health challenges, two critical and often interconnected issues affecting individuals and families across the region.

“Substance use is not a moral failure—it’s a complex health issue that deserves the same care, compassion, and support as any other condition,” said Kay Schmidt, Emergency Response Coordinator at SWNPHD. “We want to send a clear message: recovery is possible, and no one should have to suffer in silence.”

Despite progress in public understanding, stigma continues to stand in the way of healing. Misconceptions and judgment can drive people away from the very support they need—leading to untreated addiction, isolation, and preventable tragedies.

In the months ahead, SWNPHD will continue leading efforts to educate and empower the community, including:

- **Community Health and Wellness Collaboratives** – Uniting providers and organizations across the district to deliver resources and peer-based support, especially in areas impacted by substance use.
- **Public Awareness and Educational Campaigns** – Challenging outdated perceptions, sharing stories of recovery, and promoting harm reduction and prevention.
- **Training for Local Organizations** – Helping schools, workplaces, and faith communities better understand substance use and develop inclusive support strategies.

As part of these efforts, SWNPHD also encourages individuals to explore **CredibleMind**, a free, science-backed mental health and wellness resource, available at swhealth.crediblemind.com.

SWNPHD invites community members, partners, and stakeholders to help create a culture where seeking help is seen as strength—and where everyone, regardless of their past or their path, has a chance at health and dignity.

For more information about mental health resources talk to your mental health provider or contact SWNPHD at 308-345-4223. Southwest Nebraska Public Health Department serves Chase, Dundy, Frontier, Furnas, Hayes, Hitchcock, Keith, Perkins, and Red Willow counties. You can follow SWNPHD on Facebook, YouTube, and Instagram or view the website at www.swhealth.ne.gov which contains many resources and additional information helpful to prevent disease, promote and protect health.

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