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IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**CDC AWARDS NATION'S FIRST SUICIDE PREVENTION RESEARCH CENTER
TO UNIVERSITY OF NEVADA SCHOOL OF MEDICINE**

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) announced in late September its largest-ever national extramural investment in suicide prevention, by awarding the University of Nevada School of Medicine (UNSOM) a three-year \$1.5 million grant to support a Suicide Prevention Research Center.

Suicide is the eighth leading cause of death in the U.S. The purposes of the research center are to conduct research and training, develop and evaluate new interventions, and to facilitate regional prevention efforts supported by both government and non-government agencies.

In the seventeen-year period between 1979 and 1995, Nevada had the highest rate of suicide among all states each year. Seven of the eight states in the intermountain region ranked in the top ten states nationally in their suicide rates throughout this period. With regard to the region's persistently high youth suicide rates, the small population bases in many of the more rural states accounts for considerable observed variability in rates for individual states. The ability to aggregate data across the region would allow for much better surveillance of trends and opportunities to intervene in them.

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Suicide Prevention Research Center Established – 2

Under the co-direction of UNSOM's Trauma Institute director Tom Shires, M.D., and UNSOM trauma surgeon and professor John Fildes, M.D., the suicide research center has proposed to develop a multi-state collaborative database on completed suicides and on-fatal suicidal behaviors. This surveillance will allow the targeting implementation, and evaluation of selective and indicated interventions, based on a public health model. Training programs designed to establish local suicide prevention specialists and to impact regional professional training programs are planned. In addition, working groups will develop planned interventions targeting youth, elderly, and Native American populations.

"Suicide is a multi-faceted and difficult problem," Dr. Fildes says. "It is essential that we scientifically collect and analyze data, rather than base our intervention strategies on anecdotes."

The University of Nevada School of Medicine will collaborate with the American Association of Suicidology (AAS), the Critical Illness and Trauma Foundation (CIT), the Intermountain Regional Emergency Medical Services Coordinating Council (IRECC) and will be supported by a strong panel of expert investigators and consultants.

AAS will supplement UNSOM faculty to address the project's training and graduate education goals. It will also have major responsibility in the design of a protocol and the development of an infrastructure for a Nevada/Montana-based psychological autopsy project, in coordinating the youth suicide projects, and in facilitating consensus on nomenclature and the development of data-driven intervention strategies.

Senator Harry Reid (D-Nev.) was instrumental in inserting language into the 1998 Labor, Health and Human Services Appropriations Bill to establish the Suicide Research Prevention Center. Sen. Reid lost his father to suicide 26 years ago, and has been leading the effort for more research on prevention.