

## The Garrett Lee Smith Memorial Act

### Legislative History

Signed into law on October 21, 2004, the Garrett Lee Smith Memorial Act (GLSMA) was the first federal suicide prevention program targeted toward youth.

The law was named in memory of Senator Gordon H. Smith's son, Garrett, who died by suicide on September 8, 2003. The bill was authored by a bipartisan, bicameral group of Members of Congress intent on curbing the rate of youth suicide in the United States. The Senate cosponsors included Senators Christopher Dodd (D-CT), Mike DeWine (R-OH), Jack Reed (D-RI), Gordon Smith (R-OR) and Harry Reid (D-NV). The House of Representatives cosponsors included Representatives Bart Gordon (D-TN), Tom Osborne (R-NE), Danny Davis (D-IL) and Greg Walden (R-OR).

Initially authorized at \$82 million in funding over three years, the bill created three suicide prevention programs. The first provides grants to states and tribal organizations to create and implement statewide/tribal suicide prevention plans. The states and tribal organizations are allowed to utilize the funding in a variety of ways, including providing access to adolescent mental health screening. The second part of the bill created matching-grants for colleges and universities to encourage the development of campus-based education campaigns and intervention and referral teams. The third component established a federal suicide prevention resource center intended to collect, analyze and disseminate best practices among grantees and outside entities working to end suicide.

While the GLSMA was passed with overwhelming bipartisan support in 2004, and enjoys strong support from the mental health community, reauthorization of the act remains tied to reauthorization of the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), which has stalled in Congress since 2005.

### Congressional Funding

Beginning in Fiscal Year (FY) 2005, the bill initially authorized \$82 million in funding over three years. Additional funding has been appropriated each year since 2007. President Obama's proposed budget for FY 2011 includes just over \$40 million in funding for Garrett Lee Smith grants to state and tribal suicide prevention programs, a matching-grant program targeted toward campus awareness and intervention, and a suicide prevention resource center. To date, 34 states, 11 tribal organizations and 78 institutions of higher learning have received grant funding.

### TeenScreen as a Resource for Grantees

Many of the GLSMA grantees incorporate mental health screening into their comprehensive approach to youth suicide prevention. TeenScreen has actively reached out to grantees to serve as a resource by attending annual grantee meetings and holding conference calls for grantees, and a number of grantees have chosen to enroll as TeenScreen sites. In all, at least 13 grantees in 12 states have incorporated TeenScreen into their suicide prevention programs, including both campus and state/tribal grantees.

