The Colorado Health Foundation™

Statement from Colorado Health Foundation CEO Karen McNeil-Miller on Recent Fatal Police Shootings

DENVER, CO – We strongly support the tens of thousands of men and women who honor a lifetime promise to protect and serve. We are equally horrified at the seemingly growing number of suspicious killings of men of color by law enforcement. To us, these two statements are not contradictory – both are impacting the lives of our youngest forever, and affecting the safety and health of communities everywhere across the United States.

While we are not yet privy to all the facts in the shootings of Alton Sterling in Louisiana and Philando Castille in Minnesota – we do know that every mother, father, sister, brother – indeed, all of us, should demand to know the facts. After every such shooting death we are left to make sense of it for children, who deserve to grow up without experiencing traumatic situations that will impact the trajectory of their health and more. Like us, you may struggle to even explain it to yourself. But, explain it we must for these are American tragedies.

Last evening, before we were able to post this statement, came the appalling news of the ambush-style shooting in Dallas that, thus far, has left five police officers dead and seven others injured. Today, tomorrow and beyond there will be even more explaining to do.

While horrific, these events are opportunities for authentic community discourse and discussion. We urge you to talk with your families and friends about why

there is civil unrest as a result of these shootings. We urge you to discuss why some communities are more fearful of law enforcement than they are welcoming. We urge you to underscore that an injustice to any people is an injustice to all people. We urge you to be resolute in the notion that violence upon violence is not the solution.

Lastly, we urge everyone to be thoughtful about how children and youth are exposed to these horrifying events. Following are links to resources that may be supportive to having these difficult, but important discussions:

- National Association for the Education of Young Children offers online resources for parents, teachers and anyone working with young children about coping with violence and talking to young children about tragedies they learn about in the media.
- Cure Violence is an organization working to activate the health sector in preventing violence, and offers resources for the health sector to play a role in community-based violence.

Our hearts grieve with and for the families and communities affected by all of these shootings. We also grieve for those law enforcement who do not deserve to be vilified for the actions of a few. And, we will grieve if we miss yet another opportunity to build a collective community conscience.

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