

Everyone Can Play a Role in the Conversation about Mental Health

On June 3, 2013, President Obama convened a National Conference on Mental Health at the White House. Dozens of organizations representing media, educators, health care providers, faith communities, and foundations committed to take steps to increase understanding and awareness of mental health.

Increasing awareness of mental health issues and making it easier for people to seek help will take partners working together. Faith and community leaders can play a significant role in helping to educate individuals and families about mental health.

Did you know?

- Mental health issues affect *all members* of society in some way, shape, or form. It is estimated that one in five Americans over age 18 will experience a mental health problem this year.ⁱ
- It is estimated that 6-12 percent of transition-age youth and young adults struggle with a serious mental health condition (2.4-5 million individuals).ⁱⁱ
- Of children and youth in need of mental health services, 75-80 percent of these youth do not receive services.ⁱⁱⁱ
- Mental health involves how a person handles stress, relates to other people, manages emotions, makes decisions, and perceives the world and their sense of purpose in life.^{iv}
- Mental health is essential to the overall health and well-being.
- Misunderstandings about mental health can lead to negative attitudes that prevent people with mental illness from being accepted and supported, and can make it harder for them and their families to get help and lead productive lives in their communities.
- People can and do recover from mental health problems.

Where can I find information about mental health?

The MentalHealth.gov website provides information about mental health, signs and symptoms of mental illness, and how to talk about mental health issues. You can also find more information about how you can help your friends and loved ones to access treatment and support if needed.



Where can I find help for myself, a family member, or a friend?

If the situation is potentially life-threatening, get immediate emergency assistance by calling **911**, available 24 hours a day.

- If you or someone you know are suicidal or in emotional distress, contact the **National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1 (800) 273-TALK (8255)**. Trained crisis workers are available to talk 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.
- To find help in your community, contact the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's (SAMHSA's) **Treatment Referral Line at 1-800-662-HELP (4357)** available Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. EST.
- You can also access the **Treatment Locator** online by visiting www.SAMHSA.gov or www.mentalhealth.gov.



What can my community and I do to support individuals experiencing mental health problems?

Faith-based and neighborhood organizations play a significant role in the health and well-being of communities. Trusted and supportive relationships—such as family, long-term friendships, and connections to clergy, religious and other, community organizations—are important to building resilience and well-being.^v

Here's how you can help:

1. Learn the basic signs of mental illnesses and other facts about mental health. Understand that people can and do recover from mental health challenges and that help is available and effective.
2. Connect individuals and families within your community to mental health treatment and support if they or a loved one needs help.
3. Build a safe and supportive environment in your congregation or civic organization where people can openly talk about mental health issues.
4. Promote awareness by educating your congregations and communities about mental health issues through educational forums and other opportunities. You can invite local mental health experts – including those who have experienced mental illness – to speak with your congregation or at community gatherings.

If you or someone in your community is looking for experts to serve as speakers or to link to other local services, please visit [MentalHealth.gov](http://www.MentalHealth.gov) for a list of partner organizations that can serve as a resource.

Together we can help improve America's health and the health of our families and communities.

For more resources visit www.MentalHealth.gov and www.SAMHSA.gov.

ⁱ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. (2012). *Results from the 2011 National Survey on Drug Use and Health: Mental Health Findings* (NSDUH Series, H-45, HHS Publication No. (SMA) 12-4725). Rockville, MD. Retrieved from http://www.samhsa.gov/data/NSDUH/2k10MH_Findings/2k10MHResults.htm

ⁱⁱ Davis, M., & Vander Stoep, A. (1997). The transition to adulthood for youth who have serious emotional disturbance: Developmental Transition and young adult outcomes. *Journal of Mental Health Administration*, 24(4), 400-426.

ⁱⁱⁱ Kataoka, S., Zhang, L., & Wells, K. (2002). Unmet needs for mental health care among U.S. children: Variation by ethnicity and insurance status. *American Journal of Psychiatry*, 159(9), 1548-1555

^{iv} U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. (1999). *Mental Health: A Report of the Surgeon General*. Rockville, MD: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services; Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, Center for Mental Health Services; National Institutes of Health, National Institute of Mental Health.

^v U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of the Surgeon General. (2011). *National Prevention Strategy*. Washington, DC: National Prevention Council. Retrieved from <http://www.surgeongeneral.gov/initiatives/prevention/strategy/report.pdf>