

GUMC HEALTH AWARENESS INITIATIVE

JULY 2025

July is National Minority Mental Health Awareness Month. This observance raises awareness of the challenges that affect the mental health of people in racial and ethnic minority groups. July is Minority Mental Health Awareness Month but reducing health disparities is a priority year-round according to the CDC. Everyone benefits when people from racial and ethnic minority groups can thrive. We all have a role to play in promoting mental health for people in racial and ethnic minority groups. Share this information with your colleagues and in your communities!

Mental Health Matters - Mental health includes our emotional, psychological, and social well-being. It affects how we think, feel, act, handle stress, relate to others, and make choices. Mental health is just as important as physical health throughout our lives. Mental health issues are common – nearly 1 in 4 US adults live with a mental illness. Mental health issues are treatable and often preventable.

Health Disparities - According to the 2018 U.S. Census report, the year 2030 marks a demographic turning point for the United States. The nation's population is projected to age considerably and become more racially and ethnically diverse. Health disparities are preventable differences in the burden of disease, injury, violence, or opportunities to achieve optimal health that are experienced by populations that have been disadvantaged by their social or economic status, geographic location, and environment. Many populations experience health disparities, which can lead to poor health outcomes.

Mental Health Conditions – A mental illness is a condition that affects a person's thinking, feeling or mood. Each person will have different experiences, even people with the same diagnosis. Mental health conditions include: Anxiety Disorders, ADHD, Bipolar Disorder, Borderline Personality Disorder, Depression, Dissociative Disorders, Eating Disorders, Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder, Posttraumatic Stress Disorder, Psychosis, Schizoaffective Disorder, and Schizophrenia.

These conditions deeply impact day-to-day living and may also affect the ability to relate to others. Mental health conditions are far more common than you think, mainly because people don't like to, or are scared to, talk about them. A mental health condition isn't the result of one event. Research suggests multiple, linking causes. Genetics, environment and lifestyle influence whether someone develops a mental health condition. A stressful job or home life makes some people more susceptible, as do traumatic life events. Biochemical processes and circuits and basic brain structure may play a role, too. None of this means that you're broken or that you, or your family, did something "wrong." Mental illness is no one's fault. And for many people, recovery, including meaningful roles in social life, school and work, is possible, especially when you start treatment early and play a strong role in your own recovery process.

Common Signs of Mental Health Conditions – Trying to tell the difference between what expected behaviors are and what might be the signs of a mental illness isn't always easy. There's no easy test that can let someone know if there is mental illness or if actions and thoughts might be typical behaviors of a person or the result of a physical illness. Each illness has its own symptoms, but common signs of mental illness in adults and adolescents can include the following:

- Excessive worrying or fear
- Feeling excessively sad or low
- Confused thinking or problems concentrating and learning
- Extreme mood changes, including uncontrollable "highs" or feelings of euphoria
- Prolonged or strong feelings of irritability or anger
- Avoiding friends and social activities
- Difficulties understanding or relating to other people

- Changes in sleeping habits or feeling tired and low energy
- Changes in eating habits such as increased hunger or lack of appetite
- Changes in sex drive
- Difficulty perceiving reality (delusions or hallucinations, in which a person experiences and senses things that don't exist in objective reality)
- Inability to perceive changes in one's own feelings, behavior or personality ("lack of insight") It's a person's inability to accept that they have a condition that matches up with their symptoms or a formal diagnosis.)
- Overuse of substances like alcohol or drugs
- Multiple physical ailments without obvious causes (such as headaches, stomach aches, vague and ongoing "aches and pains")
- Thinking about suicide
- Inability to carry out daily activities or handle daily problems and stress
- An intense fear of weight gain or concern with appearance.

Mental health conditions can also begin to develop in young children. Because they're still learning how to identify and talk about thoughts and emotions, their most obvious symptoms are behavioral. Symptoms in children may include the following: 1) Changes in school performance. 2) Excessive worry or anxiety, for instance fighting to avoid bed or school. 3) Hyperactive behavior. 4) Frequent nightmares. 5) Frequent disobedience or aggression. And, 6) frequent temper tantrums.

Receiving A Diagnosis - Knowing warning signs can help let you know if you need to speak to a professional. For many people, getting an accurate diagnosis is the first step in a treatment plan. Unlike diabetes or cancer, there is no medical test that can accurately diagnose mental illness. A mental health professional will use the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, published by the American Psychiatric Association, to assess symptoms and make a diagnosis. The manual lists criteria including feelings and behaviors and time limits in order to be officially classified as a mental health condition. After diagnosis, a health care provider can help develop a treatment plan that could include medication, therapy or other lifestyle changes.

Finding Treatment - Getting a diagnosis is just the first step; knowing your own preferences and goals is also important. Treatments for mental illness vary by diagnosis and by person. There's no "one size fits all" treatment. Treatment options can include medication, counseling (therapy), social support and education.

Where To Get Help - Don't be afraid to reach out if you or someone you know needs help. Learning all you can about mental health is an important first step. Reach out to your health insurance, primary care doctor or state/county mental health authority for more resources. Contact the NAMI HelpLine to find out what services and supports are available in your community. If you or someone you know needs help now, you should immediately call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-8255 or call 911.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, CLICK ON LINK BELOW OR CALL:

National Alliance on Mental Illness www.nami.org 1-800-950-6264 | Or in a crisis, text "NAMI" to 741741 | Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) 1- 800-232-4636

DISCLAIMER: The information contained in this document is not intended to diagnose, treat, or to be misrepresented as a cure for mental illness. It is "intended to be used and must be used for informational purposes only" and readers should "take independent medical advice from a medical professional."