The Quick Facts:

1 in 5 adults suffer from a mental health condition, and such conditions are the leading cause of disability in the U.S.

Suicide is the tenth leading cause of death for all Americans and the second leading cause of death for Americans between the ages of 15 and 34.

Persons with serious mental illnesses struggle with the symptoms and disabilities that result from the disease and are challenged by the stereotypes and prejudice that result from misconceptions about mental illness.

Mental Health in The U.S.

Nearly half of adults with mental health conditions suffer a co-occurring substance abuse disorder.

Anxiety and depression are markedly higher today than they were in the twentieth century.

Mental health concerns can be addressed through preventative action. Early identification and intervention is critical.

Access to quality insurance and mental health services is improving, yet remains a significant problem in the United States. Persons with mental health conditions must often pay out of pocket as their conditions aren’t treated in the same way other physical health conditions are.

While many individuals with mental health conditions do not recognize their symptoms, one in five adults with mental health conditions report they are not able to access the treatment they need.

What’s the Problem?

Stigma is inherently linked to power and oppression; stereotypical associations between individuals and problematic ideas are created by the powerful and applied to the powerless.

Individuals experiencing mental health conditions often face rejection, bullying, and discrimination.

Individuals already facing stigma because of their group identity (e.g., poor, black, homeless, female, LGBTQ individuals, etc.) may face compounded stigma when suffering the added burden of a mental health condition.

Negative attitudes about individuals suffering from mental health conditions create barriers through delays in help-seeking, discontinuation of treatment, suboptimal therapeutic relationship, patient safety concerns and poorer quality mental and physical care. In 2017 only 44% of American adults with a mental condition received treatment.

Federal funding for mental health concerns lags far behind other issues. Various studies have found that mental health professionals were similar to the general public in their desired social distance from individuals with mental health conditions. This can result in inferior care for individuals suffering from mental health conditions.

Stigmatization Beliefs:

Stigmatizing beliefs about people with mental health conditions may include:

People with mental health conditions are unpredictable and potentially violent.

People with mental health conditions are to blame for their mental health conditions.

People with mental health conditions are unable to do anything but the most menial of jobs.

People with mental health conditions are childlike and innocent. As a result, they need an authority figure (e.g., parent or psychiatrist) to make decisions about goals and treatments.

Stigma is defined as the “stereotypical or negative views attributed to a person or groups of people when their characteristic or behaviors are viewed as different from or inferior to societal norms.”
VULNERABLE POPULATIONS

LGBTQ
LGBTQ individuals are 2 or more times more likely as straight individuals to have a mental health condition. 11% of transgender individuals reported being denied care by mental health clinics due to bias or discrimination. Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and questioning (LGBTQ) youth are 2 to 3 times more likely to attempt suicide than straight youth.

African-Americans
According to the Health and Human Services Office of Minority Health, African Americans are 20% more likely to experience serious mental health problems than the general population. Only about one-quarter of African Americans seek mental health care, compared to 40% of whites. In the African American community, many people misunderstand what a mental health condition is and don’t talk about this topic.

Teenagers
Mental health conditions are common among teens and young adults. 1 in 5 live with a mental health condition. Approximately 50% of students age 14 and older with a mental illness drop out of high school. Suicide is the third-leading cause of death for young people ages 15 to 24. Only 30% of depressed teens are being treated for it.

STRATEGIES TO REDUCE STIGMA

- Direct services such as crisis intervention.
- Instructional training programs for certain groups of individuals who work with people suffering from mental health conditions.
- Advocacy Efforts, including social media campaigns and letter writing to encourage policy change.
- Public Education: Efforts to build awareness such as mental health literacy campaigns.
- Programs that encourage or facilitate direct or indirect contact between people suffering from mental illness and those who are not.
- Work with institutions (e.g., universities) to implement inclusive policies.

Resources:

- Trevor Project - info on the unique experience of mental health for LGBTQ communities
- Mental Health America - disparities among populations of color and African American populations
- NAMI - National Alliance on Mental Illness
- CDC - Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (mental health)
- Active Minds - info on the mental health crisis among the younger generation