

News Release

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Statement from HHS Secretary Kathleen Sebelius on Mental Health Month

Last year, 45.9 million adult Americans had a mental illness, according to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's (SAMHSA) National Survey on Drug Use and Health. These conditions affect individuals, their families and loved ones, and communities. Unfortunately, many individuals do not receive needed services and treatment. In fact, estimates show that one-fifth to one-third of the uninsured are people with mental and substance use disorders. People with mental illnesses also experience disparities in income, employment, education, homelessness, full community participation, and most tragically – life expectancy. Outdated misperceptions, myths, and prejudice lead to many of these outcomes.

Mental Health Month was established in 1949 to increase awareness of the importance of mental health and wellness in Americans' lives, and to celebrate recovery from mental illness. We know that mental health is essential for a person's overall health; prevention works; treatment is effective; and people can recover from mental disorders and live full and productive lives.

Over the past 20 years, SAMHSA and others in the Department of Health and Human Services and across the federal government, the public health community, and the general public have increased understanding of the prevention and treatment of mental health problems. These efforts have significantly improved the outlook for those affected by mental illnesses.

Successful efforts that have raised awareness about the importance of mental health and promoted acceptance, support, prevention and recovery from these mental health conditions include:

- The Affordable Care Act expanding health insurance coverage to approximately 30 million Americans by 2016, and an estimated 11 million of these newly eligible beneficiaries will have substance abuse and/or mental health service needs.
- The Community Mental Health Services Block Grant provides financial assistance to states and territories to carry out state plans to offer comprehensive community-based mental health services and evidence-based practices to adults with serious mental illnesses and children with serious emotional disturbances.

- Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act of 2008 eliminates the practice of unequal health treatment and improves access to much needed mental health and substance use disorder treatment services through more equitable insurance coverage.
- The Garrett Lee Smith State/Tribal Suicide Prevention Program facilitates coordination across government agencies and the private sector in the development, implementation, and evaluation of youth suicide prevention and early intervention plans among youth-serving institutions, such as schools, educational institutions, juvenile justice systems, substance abuse programs, primary care, mental health programs, foster care systems, and other organizations.

Mental Health Month gives all of us a valuable opportunity to celebrate the tremendous strides this nation has made in promoting mental health and increasing the public's knowledge that effective services and support are available.

To locate mental health services in your community, visit <http://www.samhsa.gov/treatment/index.aspx> or call 1-877-SAMHSA-7 (1-877-726-4727).

For more information about mental health, visit www.samhsa.gov.

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