



THE WHITE HOUSE  
WASHINGTON

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NATIONAL MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS MONTH, 2021

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BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

A PROCLAMATION

Mental health is essential to our overall health, and the importance of attending to mental health has become even more pronounced during the COVID-19 pandemic, which has not only negatively impacted many people's mental health but has also created barriers to treatment.

Millions of adults and children across America experience mental health conditions, including anxiety, depression, schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, and post-traumatic stress disorder. Nearly one in five Americans lives with a mental health condition. Those living with mental health conditions are our family, friends, classmates, neighbors, and coworkers. Before the Affordable Care Act, insurance companies could discriminate against people based on pre-existing conditions, including mental health conditions, and mental health and substance use services were not covered by insurance. Still

discrimination against those with mental health conditions in our society remains, and can make it difficult to find and reach out for help. While our Nation has made progress in promoting mental health services, many communities face pervasive barriers in accessing mental health care.

The COVID-19 pandemic and the resulting economic crisis has impacted the mental health of millions of Americans. Isolation, sickness, grief, job loss, food instability, and loss of routines has increased the need for mental health services. At the same time, the need to protect people from COVID-19 has made it more challenging for people to access mental health services, and harder for providers to deliver this care.

Even before COVID-19, the prevalence of mental health conditions in our Nation was on the rise. In 2019, nearly 52 million adults experienced some form of mental illness. Recent data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention indicates that one in four adults reported experiencing symptoms of an anxiety or depressive disorder in February 2021 -- a significant increase from the prior year. Youth mental health is also worsening, with nearly 10 percent of America's youth reporting severe depression. We must treat this as the public health crisis that it is and reverse this trend.

Too many people with mental health needs feel they have nowhere to turn. Suicide is the tenth leading cause of death in the United States and the second leading cause of death for our Nation's youth today. Suicide rates are disproportionately high among Black youth, and LGBTQI+ persons are at disproportionate risk of death by suicide as well as suicidal ideation, planning, and attempts. My Administration is committed to advancing suicide prevention best practices and improving non-punitive crisis response. Even as we

build and enhance existing systems for prevention and response within communities, immediate assistance is available for those in need of help by calling the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-TALK or by calling 1-800-662-HELP.

My Administration is committed to ensuring that people living with mental health conditions are treated with compassion, respect, and understanding. We must also address the disparities that underserved communities, especially communities of color, face and work to ensure that everyone has access to affordable, quality, and evidence-based mental health care.

As President, I know that we can and must address these critical issues, especially for those who have shouldered the burden of standing on the front lines in responding to the pandemic. That is why the American Rescue Plan includes substantial investments to promote mental health among the health care workforce. We are also building on the progress made through the 21st Century Cures Act by integrating mental health and addiction treatment into primary care settings, schools, and homes.

My Administration is focused on building an improved, expanded system of care for the mental health needs of adults and children. This will require an increase in the number of mental health professiona