



Empowering Communities
For Health Equity and Social Justice

JULY 2026

NEWSLETTER

MINORITY MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS MONTH

July 2026

Your Guide to Taking Action

Building stronger minds.

Healing **together**.

Creating **healthier** communities.



SUPPORT



HEAL



EMPOWER

You are not alone. Help is available.

WHAT'S IN OUR JULY NEWSLETTER

WELCOME MESSAGE

Message from Our Director

Dear Community Members,

This July, as we observe **Minority Mental Health Awareness Month**, let us remember that mental health is just as important as physical health. Too often, stigma and silence prevent people from seeking the support they deserve.

Our communities face unique challenges, but you do not have to face them alone. Reaching out for help is a sign of strength, not weakness.

This guide was created to provide practical tools, trusted resources, and encouragement for you and your loved ones. I invite you to start a conversation, prioritize your well-being, and support others on their mental health journey.

Together, we can break the silence, reduce stigma, and build healthier, stronger communities.

Your mental health matters. You matter.

With hope and solidarity,

Luckenson Francois, MD, MPH

Chief Executive Director

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“Mental health is not a destination, but a process. It’s about how you drive, not where you’re going.”

— Noam Shpancer, PhD, Clinical Psychologist

WHAT IS MINORITY MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS MONTH?

July is Minority Mental Health Awareness Month, a time to raise awareness about the unique mental health challenges faced by racial and ethnic minority communities in the United States. This month is dedicated to bringing attention to mental health disparities and promoting access to quality mental health care for all.

This observance was established to honor Bebe Moore Campbell, an author and mental health advocate who worked tirelessly to break down barriers and reduce stigma around mental illness in the Black community. Today, we recognize that all minority communities—including Black, Latino, Asian American, Pacific Islander, Native American, and Alaska Native populations—face similar challenges in accessing mental health care.

Why Does This Matter to You?

Mental health challenges affect everyone, but people from racial and ethnic minority communities often face extra barriers to getting the help they need. Despite experiencing mental health conditions at similar or higher rates than White Americans, minority populations are significantly less likely to receive treatment.

The Reality

- Black and Latino communities are less likely to access mental health care, even when support is needed.
- Progress in mental health treatment has not been equal across all racial and ethnic minority groups.
- People from minority communities are more likely to receive lower-quality mental health care.
- Black and Latino individuals are at greater risk of delayed or incorrect mental health diagnoses.

The good news:

You can make a difference. This guide shows you how.

UNDERSTANDING THE BARRIERS YOU MIGHT FACE



Knowing what barriers exist can help you overcome them:

Access Barriers:

- Limited mental health services in your neighborhood
- High costs and lack of insurance coverage
- Few mental health professionals who understand your cultural background
- Services not available in your preferred language
- Long wait times for appointments

Trust and Discrimination:

- Past negative experiences with healthcare systems
- Concerns about being treated unfairly or misunderstood
- Worry about providers who don't understand your cultural experiences
- Historical injustices that make it hard to trust the system

Stigma and Cultural Concerns:

- Feeling ashamed about mental health struggles
- Worry about what family or community members will think
- Cultural beliefs that discourage talking about mental health
- Fear of being judged or labeled
- Concerns about privacy and confidentiality

Recognizing these barriers is the first step to overcoming them.

HOW RACISM AND DISCRIMINATION AFFECT MENTAL HEALTH

Experiencing racism and discrimination takes a real toll on mental health.

This includes:

- Being treated unfairly at work, school, or in public places
- Witnessing or experiencing racial violence
- Seeing images of violence against your community on social media
- Living in neighborhoods with limited resources due to discriminatory policies
- Facing barriers in education and employment opportunities
- Being discriminated against in healthcare settings

These experiences can lead to depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress, and other mental health challenges. The constant stress of dealing with racism affects both mental and physical health.

Important to know:

Your feelings in response to discrimination are valid. Seeking support is not a sign of weakness—it's a healthy response to real harm.

RECOGNIZING WHEN YOU NEED SUPPORT

Mental health is just as important as physical health. Here are signs that you or someone you care about might benefit from support:

Emotional signs:

- Feeling sad, hopeless, or empty most of the time
- Feeling anxious, worried, or on edge regularly
- Feeling angry or irritable more than usual
- Feeling numb or disconnected from life
- Experiencing mood swings

Behavioral changes:

- Loss of interest in activities you used to enjoy
- Withdrawing from friends and family
- Changes in sleep (sleeping too much or too little)
- Changes in appetite or weight
- Difficulty concentrating or making decisions
- Using alcohol or drugs to cope

Physical symptoms:

- Headaches, stomachaches, or body pain with no clear cause
- Feeling tired all the time
- Restlessness or feeling unable to sit still

Serious warning signs:

- Thoughts of death or suicide
- Thoughts of harming yourself or others
- Feeling like life isn't worth living

If you're having thoughts of suicide, call or text 988 immediately. Help is available 24/7.

EFFECTIVE WAYS TO TAKE CARE OF YOUR MENTAL HEALTH

Research shows that certain strategies work particularly well for people from minority communities. Here are proven approaches you can start using today:

Action steps:

1. Connect with Your Faith Community

Faith and spirituality can provide comfort, hope, and resilience during difficult times.

Action steps:

- Speak with a trusted faith leader
- Attend services or join a prayer or support group
- Practice prayer, meditation, or other spiritual activities

2. Strengthen Your Support Network

Supportive relationships are essential for good mental health.

Action steps:

- Stay connected with family and friends
- Join a community or support group
- Share your feelings with someone you trust

3. Prioritize Daily Self-Care

Healthy habits support both your physical and mental well-being.

- Get enough sleep and eat balanced meals
- Stay physically active
- Make time for rest and enjoyable activities

4. Embrace Your Culture

Cultural traditions and community can be powerful sources of healing and strength.

Action steps:

- Participate in cultural events or traditions
- Connect with elders and community members
- Express yourself through music, art, or storytelling

5. Protect Your Mental Well-Being

Reducing exposure to stressful content can help lower anxiety and emotional distress.

Action steps:

- Limit time spent on news and social media
- Take regular digital breaks
- Choose positive, uplifting content whenever possible

HOW TO FIND PROFESSIONAL MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT

Professional help is available, and you deserve compassionate, high-quality care. Here are six steps to help you get started:

1. Start with Your Primary Care Provider

Discuss your concerns and ask for a mental health screening or referral.

2. Find a Mental Health Professional

Look for a licensed counselor, psychologist, psychiatrist, or therapist who meets your needs.

3. Seek Culturally Responsive Care

Choose a provider who understands and respects your cultural background and experiences.

4. Check Your Insurance Coverage

Review your benefits to learn which mental health services and providers are covered.

5. Ask for Trusted Recommendations

Reach out to family, friends, faith leaders, or community organizations for referrals.

6. Keep Looking if Needed

If your first provider isn't the right fit, don't give up. Finding someone you trust is an important part of your healing journey.



RESOURCES AVAILABLE RIGHT NOW

Crisis Support (24/7):

- **988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline:** Call or text 988 (available in English and Spanish)
- **Crisis Text Line:** Text "HELLO" to 741741
- **SAMHSA National Helpline:** 1-800-662-4357 (free, confidential, 24/7 support for mental health and substance use)
- **BlackLine:** 1-800-604-5841 (crisis support for Black, Black LGBTQ+, Brown, Native, and Muslim communities)

- National Domestic Violence Hotline: 1-800-799-7233

Finding Care:

- **SAMHSA Treatment Locator:** findtreatment.gov (find mental health and substance use treatment)
- **Health Resources and Services Administration:** findahealthcenter.hrsa.gov (find community health centers)
- **National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) Helpline:** 1-800-950-6264 or text "NAMI" to 741741

Community-Specific Resources:

- **Black Emotional and Mental Health Collective (BEAM):** beam.community
- **National Latino Behavioral Health Association:** nlbha.org
- **Asian American Psychological Association:** aapaonline.org
- **National Indian Health Board:** nihb.org
- **National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI):** nami.org (offers support groups and education)

For Youth:

- **The Trevor Project (LGBTQ+ youth):** 1-866-488-7386 or text "START" to 678678
- **Boys Town National Hotline:** 1-800-448-38

HOW TO SUPPORT OTHERS IN YOUR COMMUNITY

You can make a difference in someone else's mental health journey.

Action steps:

- Check in regularly with friends and family: "How are you really doing?"
- Listen without judgment when someone shares their struggles
- Avoid saying things like "just pray about it" or "be strong"—validate their feelings instead
- Offer specific help: "Can I help you find a therapist?" or "Would you like company at your first appointment?"
- Share mental health resources and information
- Speak openly about mental health to reduce stigma
- Notice warning signs and gently encourage professional help when needed
- Respect confidentiality when someone confides in you.

TAKE ACTION THIS JULY

Use Minority Mental Health Awareness Month as a starting point for change:

Personal actions:

- Schedule a mental health check-in with yourself
- Try one new self-care practice this month
- Reach out to a mental health provider if you've been considering it
- Talk to one trusted person about your mental health

Community actions:

- Share mental health resources on social media
- Organize or attend a community conversation about mental health
- Support organizations working to improve mental health in minority communities
- Advocate for better mental health services in your neighborhood
- Challenge stigma when you hear it

Remember: Taking care of your mental health is not selfish—it's necessary. You deserve support, healing, and wellness. Your mental health matters, and help is available.

This July, let's work together to break down barriers, reduce stigma, and ensure everyone in our communities can access the mental health care they need and deserve.

Join Us This Month

July 2026 Calendar of Events

08
JUL

VFC Clinic in Orange
3:15-6:30 PM- Berlitz

11
JUL

Translation/Interpretation Services at Food Distribution Pantry
East Orange-Luckenson

15
JUL

VFC Clinic in Irvington
3:15-6:30 PM- Berlitz

17
JUL

Translation/Interpretation Services at Food Distribution Pantry
East Orange-Wislande

19
JUL

Community Ressource Navigation session
3-4:30 PM

25
JUL

Community Health and Wellness
Location: 881 South Orange Avenue, Newark, NJ
10:00 AM-2:00 PM
Anyone can join, and walking accepted.

26
JUL

Mental Health and Wellness Session
3-4:30 PM



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Educational content only—not a substitute for medical advice. Consult a qualified provider.