



Office of African American Affairs

BLACK MENTAL HEALTH

July is BIPOC Mental Health Awareness Month

For many in the African American Community, Mental Health is not a topic that is often discussed. Our story is one of perseverance and resilience. Many see reaching out as a sign of weakness and this causes many to stay silent. This is an illness many struggle with and its time we start looking at Mental Health for what it is.

According to the National Alliance on Mental Illness, [i] approximately 1 in 5 adults in the United States experience mental illness each year. Mental illness does not discriminate based on skin color and African Americans are less likely than Whites to seek out treatment. Why?

According to an article published by the National Alliance on Mental Illness[i], 6.9% of American Adults live with major depression and 18.1% struggle with anxiety disorders. It is also recorded that 1.1 American Adults live with schizophrenia. According to these numbers, more adults in America struggle with anxiety and depression over schizophrenia. There has been a tendency for clinicians to overemphasize the symptoms of major depression in African Americans and other ethnic groups leading to misdiagnosed individuals [iv.] In our community, it is that we have a history of being misdiagnosed and that's another reason we hesitate to seek help?

In New Mexico, 39.6% of our African American youth reported they seriously considered suicide in 2017 [iii.] In America, the death rate for suicide for African American men was more than four times greater than for African American women, in 2017 according to the US Department of Health and Human Services Office of Minority Mental Health [ii].

When does the conversation start to change? Is it possible we start to look at mental health through the lenses of emotional and mental well-being? Mental health encompasses more than anxiety, depression, and bipolar disorder diagnosis. As a community can we start looking at mental health as an illness just like we would high blood pressure or diabetes, rather than a sign of weakness?

If you or someone you know is dealing with Mental Health, know you are not alone. There are resources available to you. Please consider the resources below.

For information on emotional wellness, please see the [Emotional Wellness Toolkit](#)

For information on Black Mental Health email or call New Mexico Black Mental Health Coalition at (505) 407-6784 or NMBlackMentalHealth@gmail.com.

For information on Mental Health in New Mexico visit [National Alliance on Mental Illness \(NAMI\)](#).



Photo Credit: Unsplash

Let's Change the Conversation. Mental Illness Should Be Looked at as We Look at Diabetes, Not a Sign of Weakness

Article Resources:

[i] National Alliance on Mental Illness. (n.d.) Mental health facts in America. Source.

[ii] U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Office of Minority Mental Health. (September, 2017). Mental health and African Americans. Source.

[iii] For more information on the report done by New Mexico Department of health please visit Source.

[iv] For more information on misdiagnosis visit Source.