



COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO NEWS RELEASE

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CONTACT: José A. Álvarez (619) 515-6635

MAY IS NATIONAL MENTAL HEALTH MONTH

Health Officials Encourage People with Mental Health Problems to Seek Help; County's Access and Crisis Line is (800) 479-3339

May is Mental Health Month and San Diego County Health and Human Services Agency (HHS) officials are reminding people that the County offers treatment programs for those with mental health problems to help them lead healthy, normal lives.

"A person's mental health is key to leading fulfilling, healthy, and productive lives," said Alfredo Aguirre, Deputy Director for HHS's Mental Health Services Division. "We want to remind people that they are not alone. We are here to help."

Studies have shown that at least 20 percent of children and adolescents in the United States have a mental health disorder and one in 10, or about six million people, have a serious emotional disturbance. Therefore, they are at much greater risk for trouble in school and in the community, substance abuse and even suicide.

Mental health problems are more common in adults with 26 percent of people 18 and older—about 58 million—suffering from a diagnosable mental disorder. Furthermore, about six percent of adults suffer from a serious mental illness.

The County offers mental health services for people of all ages in every region of the County. Services include:

- Mental health assessments
- Individual, family and group therapy
- Special services for children
- Medication services
- Crisis intervention and 24-hour psychiatric emergency care

Mental health services are confidential and based on the belief that people can and do recover from mental illness. It is estimated that as many as 80 percent of people suffering from a mental illness can lead productive lives if they receive appropriate treatment.

However, the stigma associated with mental illness keeps many people from seeking the help they need.

"The fear of rejection and discrimination prevents people with a mental illness from getting access to needed mental health services, especially among certain ethnic communities. Mental Health Month and other awareness campaigns are helping change the way people with a mental illness are viewed," added Aguirre.

Some of the warning signs of a mental illness include severe feelings of sadness, hopelessness, anxiety, and panic attacks. For more information or for help with mental health problems, call the County's Access and Crisis Line at (800) 479-3339.

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