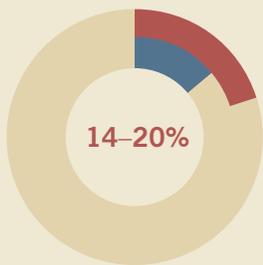# Promotion of Mental, Emotional, and Behavioral Well-Being in the U.S.

14–20%

In any given year, the percentage of **young people with mental, emotional, and behavioral disorders** is estimated to be between 14 and 20 percent.[1*]

more than
half

Among adults reporting a mental, emotional, or behavioral disorder during their lifetime, more than half **report that the disorder started in childhood or adolescence.**[2]

20PERCENT

An estimated one in 5 (or 46 million) people aged 18 or older in the United States **had any mental illness in the past year.**[3]

$247
BILLION

Mental, emotional, and behavioral issues among young people have enormous personal, family, and societal costs. The **annual cost of these disorders** was estimated in 2007 to be $247 billion.[4]

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* SAMHSA's National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH) defines any mental illness as currently or at any time in the past year having had a diagnosable mental, behavioral, or emotional disorder (excluding developmental and substance use disorders) of sufficient duration to meet diagnostic criteria specified within the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-IV; American Psychiatric Association [APA], 1994).

Prevention, early intervention, and mental health promotion can help assure the health of young children and adolescents. There are several core concepts behind the science of prevention and promotion:[5]

- Prevention of mental, emotional and behavioral disorders requires a shift in focus. Instead of addressing a disorder after it occurs, prevention means supporting the healthy development of young people starting at birth.

- Mental health and physical health go hand in hand. Young people who grow up in good physical health are likely to also have good mental health; similarly, good mental health contributes to good physical health.

- Successful prevention must involve many different groups, including informed parents, professional educators (e.g., elementary school teachers), as well as mental health and substance abuse prevention and treatment professionals.

- Promotion of mental health is essential throughout a young person's developmental life cycle — from the earliest years of life through adolescence and young adulthood — as well as in a variety of settings such as families, schools, neighborhoods, and communities.

Factors that Impact the Healthy Development of Young People

- Exposure to risk and protective factors affects the healthy development and mental, emotional, and behavioral well-being of young people. Risk factors are conditions or characteristics that put an individual at greater risk for a specific health problem or disorder. Protective factors are personal traits or conditions in families and communities that, when present, contribute to an individual's well-being.[6]

- While protective factors can make people resilient to mental, emotional, and behavioral disorders, risk factors can be detrimental to mental, emotional, and behavioral well-being. Some risk factors include:

  - Negative experiences when communicating with others in the home.[7]

- An inability to confide in at least one close family member.[8]

- The absence of positive role models.[9]

- Loneliness or a perceived lack of safety, isolation, confusion and abuse.[10]

- Experiencing trauma or serious loss, such as the death of a parent or other traumatic experience, especially early in life.[11]

- Failing to maintain good physical health; physical and mental health are closely intertwined, and poor physical health can lead to the development of serious mental health issues.[12]

- Substance abuse, which can put someone at greater risk for a mental illness, and vice versa.[13,14]

Any Mental Illness in the Past Year Among People Aged 18 or Older, by State:

Percentages, Annual Averages Based on 2010 and 2011 NSDUHs

Percentages of Persons
- 21.75 - 25.70
- 20.73 - 21.74
- 19.84 - 20.72
- 18.62 - 19.83
- 17.58 - 18.61
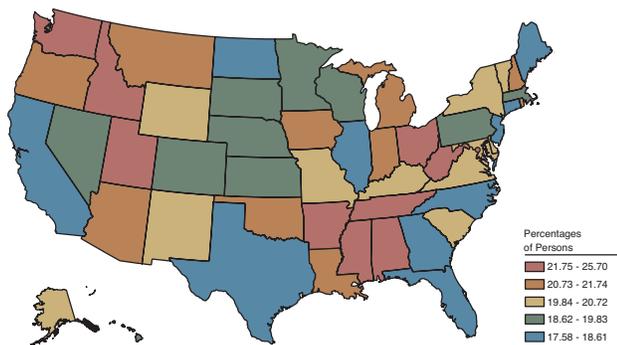
Source: SAMHSA, Center for Behavioral Health Statistics and Quality, NSDUH, 2010 (Revised March 2012) and 2011.

A National Perspective

This map displays differences in percentages of people who have experienced mental illness across the United States. While levels vary, it's important to note that at least 17.6 percent of people aged 18 or older have experienced mental illness in every state. Knowing the prevalence of these disorders in each state can help communities allocate resources to prevent future problems.

See **page 3** to learn what you can do to lower this statistic and promote mental health.

WHAT IS MENTAL, EMOTIONAL, AND BEHAVIORAL HEALTH?

Mental, emotional, and behavioral health refers to the overall psychological well-being of individuals and includes the presence of positive characteristics, such as the ability to manage stress, demonstrate flexibility under changing conditions, and bounce back from adverse situations.[15]

What Communities Can Do

Parents and Caregivers

Create a positive home environment by focusing on these key elements:

- Create and maintain a safe and secure environment, which includes making children feel valued and comfortable with sharing their problems.[16]

- Ensure positive educational experiences both at home and in school.[17]

- Be sure that you and your child communicate effectively and often.[18]

- Limit the presence of alcohol and cigarettes and do not use illicit drugs.

In addition to the positive actions you can do at home to ensure your child's well-being, ask your child's doctor about routine mental, emotional, and behavioral health screenings. Seek outside medical help from a physician or one of the additional resources listed below if:[19]

- You recognize changes in your child's behavior that concern you. Such changes would be severe, persistent, and impact your child's ability to take part in daily activities.

- Your child experiences problems such as changes in appetite or sleep patterns, social withdrawal or constant fearfulness.

- Your child exhibits signs of distress such as sadness or tearfulness, or self-destructive behavior.

Community Leaders and Organizations

- By funding mental health-related programs and awareness initiatives, communities can proactively prevent behavioral health problems rather than waiting until these issues develop and treatment is the only available option.[20]

- Communities can also develop strategies to publicly communicate the importance of mental health and the value of preventive services.

- Communities can implement evidence-based promotion and prevention services for young children, adolescents, and the caregivers of children with mental health issues. Visit SAMHSA's **National Registry of Evidence-Based Programs and Practices (NREPP)**, available at http://www.nrepp.samhsa.gov/, for more information.

- Learn more about national efforts in the **National Prevention Strategy**, available at http://www.healthcare.gov/prevention/nphpphc/strategy/report.pdf.

Workplaces[21]

- Weave information about mental health-friendly policies and resources into routine communications and special workplace events, such as new employee orientations and banners on the company intranet.

- Institute training for supervisors about mental illnesses and how to supervise in ways that promote mental health and decrease discrimination toward employees with mental illnesses.

- Explore SAMHSA's **Workplaces That Thrive: A Resource for Creating Mental Health-Friendly Work Environments**, available at http://www.promoteacceptance.samhsa.gov/publications/business_resource.aspx, for more information about promoting mental and emotional well-being in the workplace.

Everyone

- Create and support healthy families and communities that are nurturing and positive.

- Provide stimulating activities, engage in positive communication, and offer support to children and youth, especially during times of stress.[22]

- Contact **SAMHSA's ADS Center** (Resource Center to Promote Acceptance, Dignity and Social Inclusion Associated with Mental Health) at 1-800-540-0320 to learn about what you can do to promote acceptance and make your community an accepting, safe place that promotes mental, emotional, and behavioral health.

Helpful Resources

- **SAMHSA's National Registry of Evidence-Based Programs and Practices (NREPP)**, available at http://nrepp.samhsa.gov, is a searchable online registry of more than 250 interventions supporting mental health promotion, substance abuse prevention, and mental health and substance abuse treatment.

- **"Preventing Mental, Emotional, and Behavioral Disorders Among Young People: Progress and Possibilities" by The National Research Council and Institute of Medicine,** available at http://iom.edu/Reports/2009/Preventing-Mental-Emotional-and-Behavioral-Disorders-Among-Young-People-Progress-and-Possibilities.aspx, is a resource that analyzes prevention practices that have emerged in a variety of settings, including programs for at-risk populations (such as children and youth in the child welfare system), school-based interventions, interventions in primary care settings, and community services designed to address a broad array of mental health needs and populations. This resource focuses special attention on the research base and program experience with younger populations.

- **SAMHSA's Resource Center to Promote Acceptance, Dignity and Social Inclusion Associated with Mental Health (ADS Center)**, available at http://promoteacceptance.samhsa.gov/default.aspx, is a center that enhances acceptance and social inclusion by ensuring that people with mental health problems can live full, productive lives within communities without fear of prejudice and discrimination. The ADS Center provides information and assistance to develop successful efforts to counteract prejudice and discrimination and promote social inclusion.

- **The Partnership for Workplace Mental Health**, available at http://www.workplacementalhealth.org, is an organization that collaborates with employers and maintains a database of successful innovations and strategies.

- **SAMHSA's Mental Health Services Locator** available at http://store.samhsa.gov/mhlocator, is a resource that can help people find mental health services and resources in their communities.

Confidential help is available 24 hours a day through the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 1-800-273-TALK (8255), a toll-free service funded by SAMHSA. You can also call SAMHSA's National Helpline, 1-800-662-HELP (4357) or 1-800-487-4889 (TDD), for free and confidential information and treatment referrals in English and Spanish.

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