



## MENTAL ILLNESS FACTS

Mental illnesses are disorders of the brain that can often profoundly disrupt a person's thinking, feeling, mood, and ability to relate to others. Mental illnesses include such disorders as bipolar disorder, schizophrenia, major depression, obsessive-compulsive disorder, anxiety disorders including Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), and other severe and persistent mental illnesses.

Mental illnesses can affect persons of any age, race, religion, or socioeconomic status. Mental illnesses are not the result of personal weakness, lack of character, or poor upbringing.

Treatment works for most people living with mental illness, and an array of services and supports including access to appropriate medication and peer-support service are necessary to ensure recovery.

The unintended consequence of untreated mental illness results in a negative financial and social impact to police, educators, emergency rooms, and businesses. Cost-effective, proven treatment and services exist that not only support recovery for people living with mental illness but also ensure the health of America's communities and families.

Here are some important facts about mental illness and recovery:

- Mental disorders fall along a continuum of severity. The most serious and disabling conditions affect five to ten million adults (2.6 – 5.4%) and three to five million children ages nine to seventeen (9 – 13%) in the United States.
- Mental disorders are the leading cause of disability (lost years of productive life) in the North America, Europe and, increasingly, in the world. By 2020, Major Depressive Illness will be the leading cause of disability in the world for women and children.
- Mental illnesses strike individuals in the prime of their lives, often during adolescence and young adulthood. All ages are susceptible, but the young and the old are especially vulnerable.
- Without treatment the consequences of mental illness for the individual and society are staggering: unnecessary disability, unemployment, substance abuse, homelessness, inappropriate incarceration, and suicide. The economic cost of untreated mental illness is more than 100 billion dollars each year in the United States.
- The best treatments for serious mental illnesses today are highly effective; between 70 and 90 percent of individuals have significant reduction of symptoms and improved quality of life with a combination of pharmacological and psychosocial treatments and supports.
- Early identification and treatment is of vital importance. By getting people the treatment they need early, recovery is possible.

*NAMI is the National Alliance on Mental Illness, the largest grassroots mental health organization dedicated to improving the lives of persons living with serious mental illness and their families. Founded in 1979, NAMI has become the nation's voice on mental illness, a nationwide organization with affiliates in every state and in more than 1,100 local communities across the country.*

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