

Mental Illness Awareness Week Guide

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services
Administration Resource Center to Promote
Accceptance, Dignity and Social Inclusion
Associated with Mental Health

October 2010



What is Mental Illness Awareness Week?

Mental Illness Awareness Week (MIAW) is an annual observance established by an act of the U.S. Congress in 1990 to raise awareness about the importance of mental health. The annual observance, celebrated during the first full week of October, affords an excellent opportunity for networks of consumers/survivors and other advocates to bring home important messages about dignity, recovery, social inclusion, and opportunity as a right for all people with behavioral health conditions.

Some improvement has been made in the public's understanding of behavioral health. More people recognize that recovery from mental health and substance use problems is possible. However, misconceptions, prejudice, and discrimination are still far too common. To overcome erroneous beliefs, it is essential to use observances such as MIAW to hold events at the local and State levels. The awareness and educational activities at these events are powerful tools that counter stereotypes and negative attitudes by providing the public with accurate information and opportunities to interact with people in recovery from mental health and substance use problems. These interactions reinforce that recovery is possible and that people with behavioral health problems are valued members of the community.

Behavioral Health 101

The publication *Challenging Stereotypes: An Action Guide*, developed by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) Center for Mental Health Services (CMHS), emphasizes the importance of changing erroneous beliefs about people living with behavioral health conditions by noting, "All avenues of public education must be used to overcome the misperceptions that belie the present-day realities of mental illness."

Few of the misconceptions held by both the public and the media concerning people living with behavioral health conditions are as false or as damaging as the belief that they cannot be helped or cannot recover. In 2004, CMHS drafted the National Consensus Statement on Mental Health Recovery to counter these erroneous beliefs. The Statement defined mental health recovery and identified and described its fundamental components. This document defines recovery as, "a journey of healing and transformation enabling a person with a mental health problem to live a meaningful life in a community of his or her choice while striving to achieve his or her full potential." In this document, SAMHSA identified and described the 10 Fundamental Components of Recovery: self-direction; individualized and person-centered; empowerment; holistic; non-linear; strengths-based; peer support; respect; responsibility; and hope. These dimensions serve as a guide to help individuals pursuing personal recovery, as well as providers, friends, family members, employers, schools, and communities as a whole, to understand that recovery is a complex but worthwhile journey.

Discrimination happens on a broad scale and adversely impacts an individual's opportunity to participate fully. Full participation is integral to recovery, so change must become a community-wide priority. Social Inclusion is a conceptual framework for the type of broad, societal change needed to ensure that people who have behavioral and mental health conditions have the same access and opportunities others take for granted.

Social Inclusion examines why certain people are isolated or marginalized over long periods of time—and why, despite our best efforts and new and modern treatments and programs, they continue to experience high unemployment, poverty, low education, homelessness or sub-par housing, poor health outcomes, early mortality, social inequality, and economic disparities. Social Inclusion looks at the overarching social systems and culture that support or allow continued marginalization. It examines both the neighborhood- and community-level issues and the individual- and family-level issues all at once and creates a public policy approach that includes all three at the same time.

Social inclusion focuses on the total integration of people with behavioral health problems in every facet of American life. It will be achieved when every individual has the resources, opportunity, and access to participate fully in all aspects of life in the community, including equal access to economic (employment) opportunities, educational opportunities, housing, community services, legal rights, social support, and acceptance. Social Inclusion promotes social justice, relative equality, psychological esteem, and respect for all persons regardless of their behavioral health. Without inclusion, these individuals too often continue to experience injustice, discrimination, and deprivation, all of which have significant adverse impacts on their mental health. A vital step in promoting mental health is to broaden social acceptance and understanding of these issues, while encouraging those in need to seek support early on—without shame or guilt and with respect for individual choices and preferences.

Co-Occurring Issues

People with co-occurring issues have one or more mental health problems, as well as one or more substance use problems. Approximately 10 million people in the United States have co-occurring disorders. People with co-occurring disorders experience unique needs, and it is important to educate the general public to ensure these needs are addressed. SAMHSA has produced a number of publications related to this important topic. These publications can be found in the SAMHSA Publications section at the end of this guide, under “Co-Occurring Issues” and in the “Other Resources” section that follows.

The MIAW Guide

The sections that follow detail the role the SAMHSA ADS Center plays in promoting public education efforts and the resources the Center provides. The MIAW Guide offers ideas for awareness activities, resources to help plan and implement initiatives, a list of relevant SAMHSA products, and other helpful resource materials.

The ADS Center

Many public and private organizations, campaigns, and networks are working to promote changes in public attitudes and support consumers/survivors pursuing recovery. To advance these efforts, SAMHSA’s Resource Center to Promote Acceptance, Dignity and Social Inclusion Associated with Mental Health (ADS Center) was formed within the Center for Mental Health Services. Striving to provide information and assistance to develop successful efforts to counteract prejudice and discrimination and promote social inclusion, the center serves as a valuable resource to any individual or organization

looking to start, strengthen, or become involved with programs meant to further such efforts.

The SAMHSA ADS Center Web site includes a Campaigns and Programs section that provides information about local, statewide, national, and international campaigns working to reduce prejudice and discrimination and promote social inclusion. These can be an invaluable resource in learning about what others are already doing and the challenges they have encountered and successfully overcome. To learn more about these initiatives, visit the following Web address:

<http://www.promoteacceptance.samhsa.gov/campaigns/default.aspx>

Additionally, in 2009–2010, the SAMHSA ADS Center hosted a series of training teleconferences that focused on Social Inclusion. These included *Moving Towards Social Inclusion*; *Social Inclusion and Trauma Informed Care*; *IT Strategies to Promote Social Inclusion*; and *The Power of the Media and Its Impact on Mental Health Recovery*. A complete list of all archived SAMHSA ADS Center training teleconferences can be found at the following Web address:

<http://promoteacceptance.samhsa.gov/teleconferences/archive/default.aspx>

In addition, the SAMHSA ADS Center sponsored several Webcasts that focused on creating effective public education campaigns designed to increase social inclusion. A complete list of these Webcasts can be found at the following Web address:

<http://www.promoteacceptance.samhsa.gov/CMHR/webcasts/default.aspx>

Campaign for Mental Health Recovery

In 2006, SAMHSA launched the Campaign for Mental Health Recovery (CMHR). “What a Difference a Friend Makes” was designed to encourage, educate, and inspire people 18–25 years of age to support their friends who are experiencing mental health problems. The prevalence of serious mental health conditions in this age group is almost double that of the general population, yet young people have the lowest rate of help-seeking behaviors. This group has a high potential to minimize future disability if social acceptance is broadened and they receive the right support and services early on.

The campaign Web site, which can be found at <http://www.whatadifference.samhsa.gov/index.html>, offers Learn, Support, and Listen sections, which offer access to a range of materials to help young people support their friends and to make the general public more aware of recovery. Some of the key features on the site are a discussion forum; interactive videos; a stories section that includes an invitation for people to share their personal story by contacting the SAMHSA ADS Center; a downloadable brochure; links to previous Webcasts; TV, radio, and print PSAs; and a “Breaking the Myths” section. The Web site also offers links to each of the following targeted campaigns launched earlier this year:

Campaign for Mental Health Recovery—Multicultural Effort

In 2010, the CMHR campaign was expanded with four culturally targeted campaigns launched to reach African-American, Hispanic/Latino, American-Indian, and Chinese-American young adults. These culturally targeted PSAs seek to motivate a change to increase acceptance and decrease the negative attitudes surrounding mental health within

the African-American, Hispanic/Latino, American-Indian, and Chinese-American communities. The four campaign Web sites are the following:

African-American Campaign

- <http://multivu.prnewswire.com/mnr/adCouncil/42519/>
- <http://www.storiesthatheal.samhsa.gov>

Hispanic/Latino Campaign

- <http://multivu.prnewswire.com/mnr/adCouncil/44966/>
- <http://www.aceptarignorar.samhsa.gov> (in Spanish only)

American-Indian Campaign

- <http://multivu.prnewswire.com/mnr/adCouncil/44965/>
- <http://www.whatadifference.samhsa.gov/Native>

Chinese-American Campaign

- <http://multivu.prnewswire.com/mnr/adCouncil/44964/>
- <http://www.whatadifference.samhsa.gov/Chinese> (in Chinese only)

The following suggestions provide ways to bring together the community and afford the opportunity to interact directly with people who have mental health problems (the interpersonal contact approach), which has been found to be the most effective approach in promoting understanding and acceptance of people who have mental health problems.

Ideas for Awareness Activities

From broad-based to targeted efforts, MIAW will bring attention to an issue that needs to be on everybody's agenda throughout the year. MIAW is but a beginning for the effort to create meaningful change.

Broad exposure techniques include these:

Reach out to local media to run public service announcements (PSAs).

Increase awareness in the 18–25 years age group of the importance of supporting friends experiencing mental health problems by working with local media to run “What a Difference a Friend Makes” PSAs on area radio and television stations. Some radio stations may offer free air time for nonprofit or public-education announcements. Contact local mental health organizations, such as the local Mental Health America or National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) affiliate, that may have existing relationships with media and be able to pitch this idea. Approach local cable stations, community papers, and organizations such as libraries, schools, and youth centers that may be willing to include these in their newsletters or on their bulletin boards. These PSAs can be found on the “What a Difference a Friend Makes” Web site:

http://www.whatadifference.samhsa.gov/site.asp?nav=nav00&content=6_0_media

Extensive information, including many additional ideas about working with local media and other publicity avenues, can be found in the SAMHSA guide *Developing a Stigma*

Reduction Initiative, which you can download from the following link:
<http://store.samhsa.gov/product/SMA06-4176>

If you know a consumer who would be willing to be interviewed, this can be a highly effective add-on to airing PSAs. However, this would generally require that your organization already have an established relationship with media contacts in your area.

Set up a booth at a weekly farmers' market or fall festival event.

Set up a table at a weekly farmers' market or fall festival event and have volunteers talk to passersby, hand out literature, and possibly run a short video featuring individuals in recovery. Since personal interaction with mental health consumers in recovery has been found to be the most effective means of replacing inaccurate stereotypes with accurate information, choosing a public venue that can reach a lot of people in a relatively short time can be an excellent public education vehicle. Contact members of local support groups, such as the Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance, your local Mental Health America affiliate, or local consumer-run organizations, to find consumers who might be willing to volunteer to staff a table. Determine whether one of these organizations has a speaker's bureau; those who sign up to be on such a list are generally experienced and interested in participating in such events. You can also check the Campaigns and Programs section of the SAMHSA ADS Center Web site, which can be found at <http://promoteacceptance.samhsa.gov/campaigns/default.aspx>, for organizations in your area that might have volunteers or materials you could use.

Also consider contacting the SAMHSA-funded national technical assistance centers, as they can be valuable resources in helping you plan community activities. The four centers offer materials and a wide range of resources that you could use to plan community activities, and the centers can help you find local consumer-run organizations that may be willing to partner with you in your outreach. The four centers and contact information for each are as follows:

- National Mental Health Consumers' Self-Help Clearinghouse
Phone: 1-800-553-4539; Web: <http://www.mhselfhelp.org/>
- National Consumer Supporter Technical Assistance Center (NCSTAC)
Phone: 1-866-439-9465; Web: <http://www.ncstac.org/>
- National Empowerment Center
Phone: 1-800-769-3728; Web: <http://www.power2u.org/>
- NAMI STAR Center
Phone: 1-866-537-7827; Web: <http://www.consumerstar.org/>

Sponsor a Walk-a-thon for Awareness

Raise money for an area charity related to mental health, and garner support for mental health awareness, by sponsoring a walk-a-thon or some other type of event. Enlist consumers from your advocates network or speakers' bureau to coordinate and promote the event. Detailed information on planning and implementing walk-a-thons is available in the Mental Health Anti-Stigma Walkathon Development Guide, which can be accessed

at the following link on the SAMHSA ADS Center Web site:
<http://promoteacceptance.samhsa.gov/action/walkday/default.aspx>

Targeted efforts include the following:

Workplace Mental Health Makes Sense

Consider some practical, easy-to-implement, and longer range suggestions for reaching employees. A couple of simple but effective activities would be planning a group presentation by an Employee Assistance Plan representative during a brown bag lunch; adding a mental health tagline to e-mail signatures; and including information about mental health topics in your company newsletter. One activity that would require more planning would be holding a health and wellness day or health fair.

Approach the Human Resources Director to request programming. The SAMHSA Guide *Workplaces that Thrive: A Resource for Creating Mental Health-Friendly Work Environments* offers a number of suggestions on implementing activities such as these to help increase understanding. This guide also offers a wealth of information that human resources managers can use to institute practices that promote good mental health in the workplace. The resource provides ready-to-use materials for supervisor training and for communicating with employees about their roles in creating a Mental Health-Friendly Workplace. This guide, which can be found at <http://store.samhsa.gov/product/SMA07-4272>, can be ordered online at the new SAMHSA online store. A list of additional resource organizations is also included in the guide. SAMHSA's *Developing a Stigma Reduction Initiative* also offers invaluable information on reaching out to the business community to establish dialogue and build effective partnerships. You may download it from the following link: <http://store.samhsa.gov/product/SMA06-4176>

Mental Health Awareness in the Schools

Schools are a natural setting for reaching out to young people to educate them about mental health and what they can do to help friends experiencing mental health problems. Inviting a couple of young mental health consumers to speak at an assembly at your child's high school can be a very effective approach. You can enlist the help of your school's guidance counselor and Student Council in planning the program. To find presenters, you could contact one or more of the following organizations:

- Your Local Mental Health America Affiliate (locate a local affiliate at <http://www.mentalhealthamerica.net/go/searchMHA>)
- Active Minds, at <http://www.activeminds.org/>
- NAMI on Campus Chapters at Area Universities, at http://www.nami.org/template.cfm?section=NAMI_on_Campus1
- The Consumer-Run Statewide Organization (find your State's organization at <http://www.power2u.org/consumerrun-statewide.html>)
- National Coalition for Mental Health Recovery, at <http://www.ncmhr.org/>
- The Icarus Project, at <http://theicarusproject.net/>
- MindFreedom International, at <http://www.mindfreedom.org/>

You might also show the “What a Difference a Friend Makes” PSAs, which are available at http://www.whatadifference.samhsa.gov/site.asp?nav=nav00&content=6_0_media, as part of the presentation, or show the interactive videos accessible from the Support section on the Web site, which can be found at http://www.whatadifference.samhsa.gov/support.asp?nav=nav02_4&content=2_4_video

Another activity—this one for parents—would focus on increasing awareness of what helps and what hurts so parents will know how to be supportive if their teen experiences mental health problems. Talking with your school’s guidance counselor and PTA would be the way to start. More information about reaching out to high schools can be found in the SAMHSA guide *Developing a Stigma Reduction Initiative*, downloadable at the following link: <http://store.samhsa.gov/product/SMA06-4176>

Involvement of the Faith Community

Nearly 40 percent of Americans attend at least one religious or faith-related meeting weekly. Work with faith organizations in your community to include messages about stigma and mental health in unison with prayers, newsletters, sermons, and other forms of religious activity. The SAMHSA ADS Center sponsored a training teleconference titled *Working with Faith Communities to Counter Discrimination and Stigma*, which offers valuable suggestions and resources to help implement these types of efforts. The audio recording and accompanying presentations are available, upon request, from the SAMHSA ADS Center, which can be reached by phone at 1-800-540-0320 or by e-mail at promoteacceptance@samhsa.hhs.gov.

Resources for Starting Initiatives: Samples, Letters, Products

SAMHSA has created a broad range of products designed to help individuals and organizations create effective outreach and public education campaigns in their communities. The following resources provide concrete suggestions, samples, and tools to help you identify and work with key community leaders, build community coalitions, effectively market your initiative, and work with the media to help publicize your efforts.

You can use the following resources found on the Take Action section of the SAMHSA ADS Center Web site to help create effective public education and outreach campaigns.

Tips on Taking Action

The following provide advice on promoting social inclusion and reducing discrimination:

- *Developing A Stigma Reduction Initiative* (Center for Mental Health Services)
<http://store.samhsa.gov/product/SMA06-4176>
- *Challenging Stereotypes: An Action Guide* (Center for Mental Health Services)
<http://store.samhsa.gov/product/SMA01-3513>
- *How to Use the Media to Fight Stigma and Discrimination* (National Mental Health Consumers' Self-help Clearinghouse)
http://www.mhselfhelp.org/gateway.php?type=tehasstfile&tehasstfile_id=35 (Word version)

Also in Spanish: *Como Utilizar Los Medios Para Luchar El Estigma Y La Discrimination*

http://www.mhselfhelp.org/gateway.php?type=tehasstfile&tehasstfile_id=37 (Word version)

- *Partners in Recovery: Creating a Successful Practitioner-Consumer Alliance* (Center for Mental Health Services) <http://store.samhsa.gov/product/OM00-4074>
- *Highlights of the Final Report of the Evaluation of the Elimination of Barriers Initiative* (Center for Mental Health Services) http://www.promoteacceptance.samhsa.gov/archtelPDF/EBIReport_FINAL_Tagged.pdf (PDF version)

Organizing a Campaign or Program

The following provide information and advice on organizing a campaign or program designed to promote acceptance, dignity, and social inclusion:

- *Train the Trainer: A Beginner's Guide to Stamp Out Stigma* (Stamp Out Stigma) http://www.dmh.ca.gov/Mental_Health_Planning_Council/docs/Meetings/2008/Jun/0608PresentationC.ppt (Power Point version)
- *Successful Strategies for Recruiting, Training, and Utilizing Volunteers* (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services) <http://store.samhsa.gov/product/SMA08-4005>

Planning Events and Strategies to Increase Social Inclusion

The following provide information and advice on planning events and educational strategies aimed at reducing discrimination and increasing social inclusion:

- *Mental Health Anti-Stigma Walkathon Development Guide* <http://www.promoteacceptance.samhsa.gov/action/walkday/default.aspx>
- *Organizing and Operating a Speakers' Bureau* (National Mental Health Consumers' Self-help Clearinghouse) http://www.mhselfhelp.org/tehasst/view.php?tehasst_id=17 (Word version)

The Pledge for Wellness

The Federal Government has spearheaded the ***SAMHSA 10x10 Wellness Campaign***, launched in 2010. The Campaign emphasizes the importance of addressing all parts of a person's life. The goal is to extend the life expectancy of persons with mental health problems by 10 years within the next 10 years. More than 2,000 organizations and individuals have expressed their commitment to promote wellness and reduce the disproportionate impact of preventable illnesses and deaths of people with mental health problems by signing the Pledge for Wellness. The SAMHSA 10x10 Wellness initiative promotes another key message that can be publicized and promoted in public education campaigns. This message is described in the following Pledge for Wellness. Encourage those attending events to sign this pledge and share it with leaders in your community to help make the attainment of this goal a public priority.

We envision

A future in which people with mental health problems pursue optimal health, happiness, recovery, and a full and satisfying life in the community via access to a range of effective services, supports, and resources.

We pledge

To promote wellness for people with mental health problems by taking action to prevent and reduce early mortality by 10 years over the next 10 year time period.

To sign this pledge, visit:

<http://www.promoteacceptance.samhsa.gov/10by10/pledge.aspx>

A list of organizations and individuals who have already signed this pledge is available here: <http://www.promoteacceptance.samhsa.gov/10by10/pledgeparticipants.aspx>

SAMHSA Publications

In addition to the above resources focused on creating successful community-wide initiatives, SAMHSA has developed a number of other products aimed at reaching specific audiences. These products can be ordered at no cost on the SAMHSA online store (<http://store.samhsa.gov>). Some of the search terms that may be helpful when searching for available products include “Awareness,” “Mental Health Promotion,” and “Stress Prevention and Management,” and then filter further by audience, population group, or product format.

General Wellness/Prevention/Recovery Resources

- Campaign for Mental Health Recovery Community Kit (SMA07-4312) equips local partners with the campaign tools to encourage young adults to support their friends who are living with mental illness. It includes a campaign overview; television, radio, and print PSAs; Web banners; and resources for more information.
- SAMHSA News (May/June 2010, Vol. 18, No. 3): Project LAUNCH: Promoting Wellness in Early Childhood (SAM10-183)
- Addressing the Mental Health Needs of Young Children and Their Families (National Children's Mental Health Awareness Day, May 6, 2010) (SMA10-4547)
- The Next Step Toward a Better Life (SMA10-4474)

Co-Occurring Issues

- Should You Talk to Someone About a Drug, Alcohol, or Mental Health Problem? (SMA10-4585)
- Overcoming Substance Use and Mental Disorders: A Guide to Recovery from Co-Occurring Disorders (PHD1078)
- Brochure based on TIP 42 available in Spanish: El alcohol y la depresión: El camino de Jorge hacia una vida mejor (SMA10-4574)

- Building Bridges: Co-Occurring Mental Illness and Addiction: Consumers and Service Providers, Policymakers, and Researchers in Dialogue (SMA04-3892)

For Secondary School Teachers and School Staff

- Eliminating Barriers for Learning: Social and Emotional Factors that Enhance Secondary Education (SMA07-4282)
- Eliminating Barriers for Learning: It's Part of Our Classroom CD (SMA07-4283)
- Reach Out Now Kit: Poster/Teaching Guide with Bonus pages; Help Prevent Underage Alcohol Use Grades 5-6 (SMA09-4406)

For Workplace/HR Professionals

- A Mental Health Friendly Workplace (SMA07-4269)
- Workplaces That Thrive: A Resource for Creating Mental Health-Friendly Work Environments (SMA07-4272)
- Making Your Workplace Drug-Free: A Kit for Employers (SMA07-4230)

For Military Veterans and Their Families

- SAMHSA News (January/February 2008, Vol. 16, No. 1): Veterans & Their Families A SAMHSA Priority (SAM08-161)
- SAMHSA News (September/October 2008, Vol. 16, No. 5): Paving the Road Home; Returning Veterans and Behavioral Health (SMA08-165)

Other Resources

Other resources that provide useful context and may also be of interest are the following:

- National Consensus Statement on Mental Health Recovery, at <http://store.samhsa.gov/product/SMA05-4129>
- Center for Substance Abuse Treatment Recovery Month, at <http://www.recoverymonth.gov/>
- SAMHSA's Family Guide to Keeping Youth Mentally Healthy and Drug Free, at <http://family.samhsa.gov/>
- SAMHSA's Find Treatment and Mental Health Services Web site, at <http://www.samhsa.gov/treatment/>
- Developing a Stigma Reduction Initiative, at <http://store.samhsa.gov/product/SMA06-4176>
- SAMHSA 8 Strategic Initiatives, at <http://www.samhsa.gov/About/strategy.aspx>
- SAMHSA 10 x 10 Wellness Campaign Home Page, at <http://www.promoteacceptance.samhsa.gov/10by10/default.aspx>
- Eight dimensions of wellness: social, physical, emotional, spiritual, occupational, intellectual, environmental, financial (Swarbrick, 2006)

- NYC Mental Health Film Festival, at <http://nycmentalhealthfilmfestival.com/>

Closing

Mental Illness Awareness Week is an important opportunity for communities across the country to increase awareness and bring much-needed attention to the issues of recovery, acceptance, dignity, and social inclusion for individuals with behavioral health problems. Information and educational activities during MIAW can counter the misconceptions and stereotypes that are still too often associated with these conditions. During MIAW, members of the community can choose to be a part of the solution—to be leaders and supporters of positive change; become engaged; help educate others; and promote individual support, inclusion, and recovery.

When this change occurs,

- More people affected by mental health problems find the courage to share their experiences in their own circles and in public forums.
- Individuals and their communities find the will and the determination to change how we view and treat people who have behavioral health conditions so they can be fully integrated.

A quote from U.S. President Barack Obama describes the difference each of us can make, if we choose to: “We must build a world free of unnecessary barriers, stereotypes, and discrimination ... policies must be developed, attitudes must be shaped, and buildings and organizations must be designed to ensure that everyone has a chance to get the education they need and live independently as full citizens in their communities.”