

Mental illness affects one in five adults and one in 10 children in America. Furthermore, mental illness is a leading cause of disability, yet nearly two-thirds of people with a diagnosable mental illness do not seek treatment, and racial and ethnic groups in the U.S. are even less likely to get help.

What is mental health?

Mental health includes our emotional, psychological, and social well-being. It affects how we think, feel, and act. It also helps determine how we handle stress, relate to others, and make choices. Mental health is important at every stage of life, from childhood and adolescence through adulthood. Many factors contribute to mental health problems, including:

- Biological factors, such as genes or brain chemistry
- Life experiences, such as trauma or abuse
- Family history of mental health problems

What is a mental health disparity?

Healthy People 2020 defines a health disparity as a “particular type of health difference that is closely linked with social, economic, and/or environmental disadvantage. Health disparities adversely affect groups of people who have systematically experienced greater obstacles to health based on their racial or ethnic group; religion; socioeconomic status; gender; age; mental health; cognitive, sensory, or physical disability; sexual orientation or gender identity; geographic location; or other characteristics historically linked to discrimination or exclusion.”

Significant behavioral health disparities persist in diverse communities across the United States. Minorities are less likely to receive diagnosis and treatment for their mental illness, have less access to and availability of mental health services and often receive a poorer quality of mental health care. Behavioral health disparities and their impact point to the need for an increased focus on effective prevention, treatment, and services for diverse populations.

Apps for your smartphone

- [Breathe2Relax](#)
- [PTSD Coach](#)
- [SAM: Self Help for Anxiety Management](#)

Tips from our docs

This month, our healthy tip is brought to you by **Kiko Torres, MD**, NMHC’s Senior Medical Director.

If you live with mental illness, you may be struggling to find treatment, manage your medication, and cope with life's challenges effectively. You are not alone—help is available. Mental health conditions are treatable. Recovery from mental conditions is a process of change through which people work to improve their health and wellness, live a self-directed life, and strive to achieve their full potential.

Four major dimensions support a life in recovery:

- **Health:** Make informed, healthy choices that support physical and emotional well-being.
- **Home:** Have a stable, safe place to live.
- **Purpose:** Engage in meaningful daily activities, such as a job or school, volunteering, etc.
- **Community:** Build relationships and social networks that provide support.

Find additional information, screeners, and resources on our [website](#). Don’t forget: NMHC offers a \$0 copay for all outpatient behavioral health visits.

Additional resources

- [U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Office of Minority Health](#)
- [National Alliance on Mental Illness \(NAMI\)](#)
- [Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration \(SAMHSA\)](#)