



PATHWAY TO HOPE<sup>®</sup>

## What is Mental Illness ... just the facts.

Mental illnesses are medical conditions that disrupt a person's thinking, feeling, mood, ability to relate to others and daily functioning. Mental illnesses are medical conditions that often result in a diminished capacity for coping with the ordinary demands of life. Serious mental illnesses include major depression, schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD), panic disorder, post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and borderline personality disorder. The good news about mental illness is that recovery is possible.

Mental illnesses can affect persons of any age, race, religion, or income. Mental illnesses are not the result of a personal weakness, lack of character or a poor upbringing. Mental illnesses are treatable. Most people with a mental illness can experience relief from their symptoms by actively participating in an individual treatment plan.

In addition to a medication treatment, a psychosocial treatment such as cognitive behavioral therapy, interpersonal therapy, peer support groups and community services can also be components of a customized treatment plan that supports recovery. The availability of transportation, a diet plan, exercise, sleep, friends and family, along with meaningful paid or volunteer activities contribute to overall health and wellness, including mental illness recovery.

## Important facts about mental illness and recovery

- **Mental illnesses are serious medical conditions.** They can't be overcome through "will power" and aren't related to character or intelligence. Mental illness falls along a continuum of severity. Even though it is widespread, the main burden of mental illness is concentrated in a smaller population of about 6 percent (1 in 17) of Americans who live with serious mental illness. More extensively, the National Institute of Mental Health reports that one in four adults, approximately 57.7 million Americans, experience a mental health disorder of some nature in a given year.
- **The U.S. Surgeon General reports** that 10 percent of children and adolescents in the United States suffer from serious emotional and mental disorders that cause significant functional impairment in their day-to-day lives at home, in school and with peers.
- **The World Health Organization has reported** that four of the 10 leading causes of disability in the U.S. and other developed countries are mental disorders. By 2020, Major Depressive Illness will be the leading cause of disability in the world for women and children.

## Important facts (cont.)

- **Serious mental illness in U.S. adults costs society an estimated \$193.2 billion** in lost earnings per year (American Journal of Psychiatry - 2008). Although seemingly high, the findings are considered conservative. The research doesn't account for subsequent annual escalation and the fact that 1 in 4 Americans suffer short-term, yet clinically diagnosable mental disorders (e.g. depression, eating disorders) in a given year and seek no treatment.
- **Research in 2005 showed that 60 percent of all Americans** with a mental disorder received no treatment at all for their illnesses.
- **The consequences of untreated mental illness** for the individual and for society are staggering: unnecessary disability, unemployment, substance abuse, homelessness, inappropriate incarceration, suicide and ultimately wasted lives. The estimated economic cost of untreated mental illness is more than \$400 billion each year in the United States.
- **Mental illness most often strikes** individuals in the prime of their lives, presenting during adolescence and young adulthood. The old are also especially vulnerable.
- **Early identification and treatment is of vital importance.** By ensuring access to the treatment and recovery supports that have proven effective, recovery is accelerated and the further harm from the illness is minimized.
- **The best treatments for serious mental illnesses are highly effective.** Between 70 and 90 percent of individuals show significant reduction of symptoms and an improved quality of life with a combination of pharmacological and psychosocial treatments and supports.
- **With an effective medication plan and tailored services** most people living with serious mental illnesses can significantly reduce the impact of their illness and find a satisfying measure of independence and achievement.
- **Stigma erodes confidence that mental disorders are real, treatable health conditions.** We have allowed stigma and an unwarranted sense of hopelessness to erect attitudinal, structural and financial barriers to effective treatment and recovery.
- **Mental disorders are real. It's time to take the barriers down.**

April 2010



For more information, contact Pathway To Hope®, 913.397.8552 or visit our website at [www.pathwaytohope.org](http://www.pathwaytohope.org). Data from National Alliance on Mental Illness, 2010; Time/CNN article by Kathleen Kingsbury, 2008; David Wiebe, Johnson County Mental Health, 2010.