

Mental Health Information

Mental disorder or mental illness are terms used to refer to a psychological or physiological pattern that occurs in an individual and is usually associated with distress or disability that is not expected as part of normal development or culture (Wikipedia).

Mental illness can strike anyone! It knows no age limits, economic status, race, creed or color. During the course of a year, more than 54 million Americans are affected by one or more mental disorders (MHA, 2006).

Mental disorders are common in the United States and internationally. An estimated 26.2 percent of Americans ages 18 and older — about one in four adults — suffer from a diagnosable mental disorder in a given year. When applied to the 2004 U.S. Census residential population estimate for ages 18 and older, this figure translates to 57.7 million people. Even though mental disorders are widespread in the population, the main burden of illness is concentrated in a much smaller proportion — about 6 percent, or 1 in 17 — who suffer from a serious mental illness. In addition, mental disorders are the leading cause of disability in the U.S. and Canada for ages 15-44. Many people suffer from more than one mental disorder at a given time. Nearly half (45 percent) of those with any mental disorder meet criteria for 2 or more disorders (NIMH, 2008).

Everyone feels worried, anxious, sad or stressed sometimes. But with a mental illness, these feelings do not go away and are severe enough to interfere with your daily life. It can make it hard to meet and keep friends, hold a job or enjoy your life. Mental illnesses are common – they affect about one in five families in the U.S. It is not your fault if you have one. These disorders – depression, phobias, bipolar disorder, schizophrenia and many others - are real diseases that you cannot will or wish away. Fortunately, they are often treatable. Medicines and therapy can improve the life of most people with mental illnesses (Medline Plus, 2008).

Violent behavior among individuals with severe mental illness has become an important focus in community-based care. This study examines the joint effect of substance abuse and medication noncompliance on the greater risk of serious violence among persons with severe mental illness (Swartz, 1998).

On February 1, 2001, President Bush announced the New Freedom Initiative, part of a nationwide effort to remove barriers to community living for people with disabilities. It represents an important step to ensure that all Americans have the opportunity to learn and develop skills, engage in productive work, choose where they live, and participate in community life. Goals for people with disabilities include: increasing access to assistive and universally designed technologies; expanding education, transportation and home ownership opportunities; and promoting full access to community life (SAMHA'S).

