

MYTHS & FACTS: The Stigma of Mental Illness and Resulting Discrimination

MYTHS	FACTS
<p>Mental illness is something that only happens to “other people.”</p>	<p>One in 5 California adults report needing help with a mental or emotional health problem.ⁱ</p> <p>Approximately 9 million children in the U.S. have serious emotional problems, but only 1 in 5 of these children is receiving appropriate treatment.ⁱⁱ</p> <p>Children and adults alike experience a variety of mental health issues, from attention deficit hyperactivity disorder to post-partum depression to bipolar disorder.</p>
<p>Mental illness can’t be treated, you’re ill for life.</p>	<p>Not only is treatment available, but full recovery is possible. Today we are learning how to prevent mental illness and promote mental wellness.</p> <p>With support and treatment, between 70 and 90 percent of individuals have a significant reduction in symptoms and improved quality of life.ⁱⁱⁱ</p>
<p>My son/daughter is acting out, but that’s just part of being a kid.</p>	<p>Research shows that half of all mental disorders start by age 14 and three-quarters start by age 24.^{iv}</p> <p>But, an average of 6 to 8 years pass after the onset of mood disorder symptoms – 9 to 23 years for anxiety disorder symptoms – before young people get help.^v</p>
<p>People who have been diagnosed with mental illnesses are dangerous and should be avoided.</p>	<p>Mental illness accounts for, at most, 3 percent of all violence committed in the U.S.^{vi}</p> <p>People with serious mental health challenges are more likely to be victims of violence than perpetrators. More than 25 percent of people with severe mental illness report being victims of a violent crime within a given year, a rate nearly 12 times higher than that of the general population.^{vii}</p>
<p>I don’t discriminate against people who are diagnosed with a mental illness, but I don’t want to work or live near them.</p>	<p>In addition to being unfair and ethically unacceptable, it is also illegal to deny someone any rights due to their real or perceived mental illness.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 made it illegal for employers or public services to discriminate against someone living with a mental illness. • The Fair Housing Act (Title VIII of the Civil Rights Act of 1968) made it illegal for landlords or other real-estate entities to discriminate against someone living with a mental illness.
<p>I’m not a psychiatrist, I can’t make a difference for a person living with a mental health challenge.</p>	<p>Many people say that stigma and discrimination can be a bigger challenge to their quality of life than their mental health challenges are.</p> <p>You can help to end stigma by openly accepting people who are diagnosed with a mental illness in your work and in your community.</p> <p>You are in a unique position to give people who are living with mental health challenges what they, just like anyone else, truly deserve – a job, a lease, a public service or simply a respectful conversation – that helps them live a full and productive life.</p>

ⁱ UCLA Center for Health Policy Research. *Adult Mental Health Needs in California*, November 2011.

ⁱⁱ SAMHSA, *Developing a Stigma Reduction Initiative resource kit*, 2006.

ⁱⁱⁱ National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI).

^{iv} Kessler, Berglund, Demler, Jin, Walters, *Lifetime prevalence and age-of-onset distributions of DSM-IV disorders in the National Comorbidity Survey Replication*, General Psychiatry, July 2005.

^v Wang, P., Berglund, P., et al. *Failure and delay in initial treatment contact after first onset of mental disorders in the National Comorbidity Survey Replication (NCS-R)*, General Psychiatry, June 2005.

^{vi} H. Harwood, A. Ameen, G. Denmead et al., *The Economic Costs of Mental Illness, 1992*, Rockville, Md.: NIMH, 2000.

^{vii} Linda Teplin et al., *Crime Victimization in Adults with Severe Mental Illness: Comparison with the National Crime Victimization Survey*, General Psychiatry, August 2005.