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

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| Mental illness is something that only happens to “other people.”    | One in 5 California adults report needing help with a mental or emotional health problem.¹  
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  
Children and adults alike experience a variety of mental health issues, from attention deficit hyperactivity disorder to post-partum depression to bipolar disorder. |
| Mental illness can’t be treated, you’re ill for life.                | Not only is treatment available, but full recovery is possible. Today we are learning how to prevent mental illness and promote mental wellness.  
With support and treatment, between 70 and 90 percent of individuals have a significant reduction in symptoms and improved quality of life. iii |
| My son/daughter is acting out, but that’s just part of being a kid.  | Research shows that half of all mental disorders start by age 14 and three-quarters start by age 24. iv  
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 |
| People who have been diagnosed with mental illnesses are dangerous and should be avoided. | Mental illness accounts for, at most, 3 percent of all violence committed in the U.S. vi  
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 |
| I don’t discriminate against people who are diagnosed with a mental illness, but I don’t want to work or live near them. | 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.  
- 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. |
| I’m not a psychiatrist, I can’t make a difference for a person living with a mental health challenge. | Many people say that stigma and discrimination can be a bigger challenge to their quality of life than their mental health challenges are.  
You can help to end stigma by openly accepting people who are diagnosed with a mental illness in your work and in your community.  
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.  |

¹ Funded by the voter approved Mental Health Services Act (Prop. 63).
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ii SAMHSA, Developing a Stigma Reduction Initiative resource kit, 2006.

iii National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI).


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