

Mental Illness

Problem:

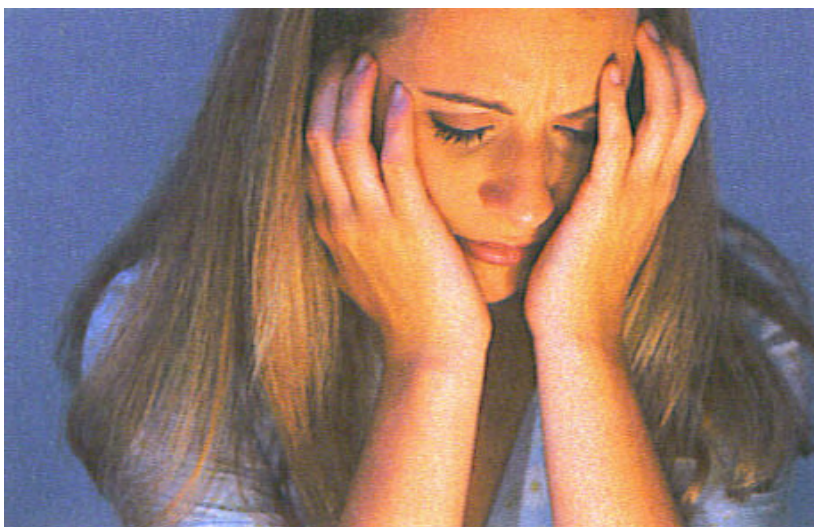
Undiagnosed and untreated mental health problems among children and adults due to stigma and inaccessible resources.

Mental health is an integral part of our overall health. Mental health can be defined as a “state of successful performance of mental function, resulting in productive activities, fulfilling relationships with other people, and the ability to adapt to change and to cope with adversity; from early childhood until late life.”³

Mental health is how people think, feel, and act as they face life's situations. It affects how people handle stress, relate to one another, and make decisions. Mental health influences the way individuals look at themselves, their lives, and others in their lives. Like physical health, mental health is important at every stage of life.

Mental health problems (mental illness) is the term that refers collectively to all mental disorders. Mental disorders are health conditions that are characterized by alterations in thinking, mood, or behavior (or some combination thereof) associated with distress and/or impaired functioning.

Mental disorders are real health conditions that have an immense impact on individuals and families. Mental disorders include depression, schizophrenia, anxiety, eating disorders, conduct disorders, attention deficit hyperactivity, autism and Alzheimer's disease.



Mental health problems are common in Washington County, Minnesota, the U.S. and internationally. An estimated 26.2% of Americans ages 18 and older — about one in four adults — suffer from a diagnosable mental disorder in a given year. Even though mental health problems are widespread in the population, the main burden of illness is concentrated in a much smaller proportion — about 6%, or 1 in 17 — who suffer from a serious mental illness. In addition, mental health problems are the leading cause of disability in both the U.S. and Canada for people ages 15-44. Many people suffer from more than one at a given time. Nearly half (45%) of those with any mental health problem meet criteria for 2 or more disorders.¹ Twenty four percent of state prison and 21% of local jail inmates have a recent history of a mental health disorder. An alarming 65% of boys and 74% of girls in juvenile detention have at least one mental disorder.²

Like adults, children and adolescents can have mental health problems that interfere with the way they think, feel, and act. When untreated, these problems can lead to school failure, family conflicts, drug abuse, violence, and even suicide. Studies show that at least one in five children and adolescents have a mental health problem. At least one in 10 or about 6 million people, have a serious emotional disturbance. Serious emotional disturbances for children and adolescents refer to the above disorders when they severely disrupt daily functioning in home, school, or community.³

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"According to the World Health Organization, depression is the leading cause of nonfatal disability on our planet, accounting for 12 percent of total productive years lost. And the numbers are going up: from 1990-2000, worldwide disability from depression increased by approximately 20 percent."⁹

Several outpatient mental health providers in the county and in the metro area serve Washington County residents. They include Family Means, Children's Home Society and Family Services, Human Services, Inc., Out Front Minnesota, White Bear Lake Community Counseling Center, and Youth Services Bureau, Inc. Several mental health crises lines also exist for emergency services.

The success of mental health treatments is well documented. Without treatment, the consequences of mental health problems are staggering: unnecessary disability, unemployment, substance abuse, homelessness, inappropriate incarceration, suicide and wasted lives. The best treatments for serious mental illnesses today are highly effective; between 70-90% of individuals have a significant reduction of symptoms and improved quality of life with a combination of prescriptions drugs, therapy and support.³ Recovery is variously called a process, an outlook, a vision, and a guiding principle. There is neither a single agreed-upon definition of recovery nor a single way to measure it. But the overarching message is that hope and restoration of a meaningful life are possible, despite serious mental illness.⁴

Despite the success of treatment options and the many possible ways of obtaining a treatment of choice, nearly half of all Americans who have a severe mental illness do not seek treatment. Most often, reluctance to seek care is an unfortunate outcome of very real barriers. Foremost among these is the stigma that many in our society attach to mental illness and to people who have a mental illness.

Stigma is defined as "a narrow set of beliefs that damage a broad, diverse group of individuals. As a basis for discrimination, stigma robs people of the opportunity to live, work, and thrive in the community." The stigma of child and adult mental health and suicide prevention services continues to hinder access to effective treatment.⁵ Nearly two thirds of all people with a diagnosable mental disorder do not seek treatment. Stigma is what keeps many people from seeking the help they need. Stigma is also about disrespect and stereotypes. The negativity and misunderstanding that often surrounds mental illnesses can create fear and cause shame, which in turn causes unnecessary pain and confusion. Much can be accomplished through a deeper understanding of mental health issues.¹⁰

Untreated mental health problems can be very costly to families, communities, and the health care system. The burden of mental illness on health and productivity in the U.S. and throughout the world has long been underestimated. Data developed by the massive *Global Burden of Disease Study*, conducted by the World Health Organization, the World Bank, and Harvard University, reveal that mental illness, including suicide, accounts for over 15% of the burden of disease in established market economies, such as the U.S. This is more than the disease burden caused by all cancers.¹ Human Resource directors state that mental illness has far more impact on the indirect costs associated with lost productivity and absenteeism than physical problems.⁶

"Mental illnesses are common. Lack of healthcare causes disability and premature death for adults and children with serious mental illnesses. Mental illness is very treatable and the right treatments save lives and money." *National Alliance on Mental Illness*

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Hospital Services, Depression and Suicide

Between 2000-2004, emergency department (ED) visits in Minnesota with a primary diagnosis of mental illness increased four times the rate of other ED visits. One of 15 people in Minnesota with a mental health diagnosis received emergency or hospital services, which are more costly than other services.⁷

Within Washington County, there were 1,311 total hospital discharges for mental disorders in 2007 which includes both adults and children receiving inpatient-only care. This is a rate of 6.1 for every 1,000 persons. In 2007, mental disorders were the leading cause of hospitalization for teens ages 15-19.

Untreated depression is the leading cause of suicide. Suicide is the second leading cause of death in Minnesota for 15 to 34 year-olds and the tenth leading cause of death for all ages combined. Suicide rates are highest among adults over 65 and adults ages 35-44. Males comprise approximately 82% of all suicide deaths. An average of 469 persons have died each year from suicide in Minnesota, three times as many as have died from homicide.⁸ In Washington County, there were 18 suicides in 2006, with the highest number of suicides reported in the 25-44 age group.

In Washington County and statewide, the percentage of youth reporting suicidal thoughts between 2004 and 2007 decreased for all ages for both males and females. Despite this decline, 9th grade girls continued to report the highest rates of suicidal ideation at 17% in the county (compared to 22% for state) followed by 12th grade girls (14%) and 12th grade boys (12%). County rates are lower than state rates for all indicators.

Although suicide may first emerge in teen years, suicide is also a concern for older adults as well. Depressive disorder is not a normal part of aging. Depression, one of the conditions most commonly associated with suicide in older adults, is a widely under-recognized and under-treated medical illness. Seniors who are diagnosed with a mental illness are taking three or more drugs that are potentially dangerous because of their adverse effects in older people.⁷

Community Feedback

Almost 90% of respondents of the community health assessment on-line survey ranked mental health issues among children, adults and seniors as a primary concern. Eight out of fourteen community health assessment input events (surveys, focus groups, interviews) rated mental illnesses as a primary concern. Community focus groups indicated the following key issues: mental health disorders particularly among children, is being seen more often; increasing aggression is seen in children; denial of mental health disorder exists due to stigma or lack of knowledge; and there are limited resources to diagnose and to properly treat mental illness for certain populations.

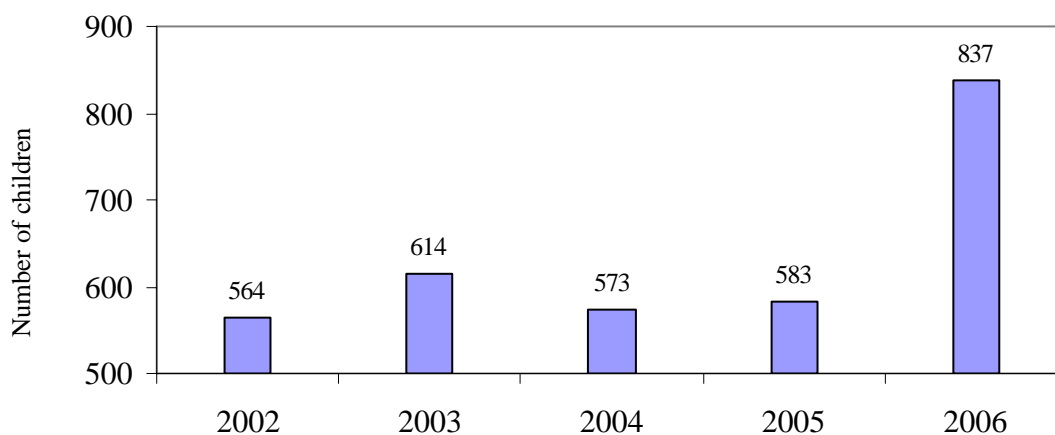
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Key Data

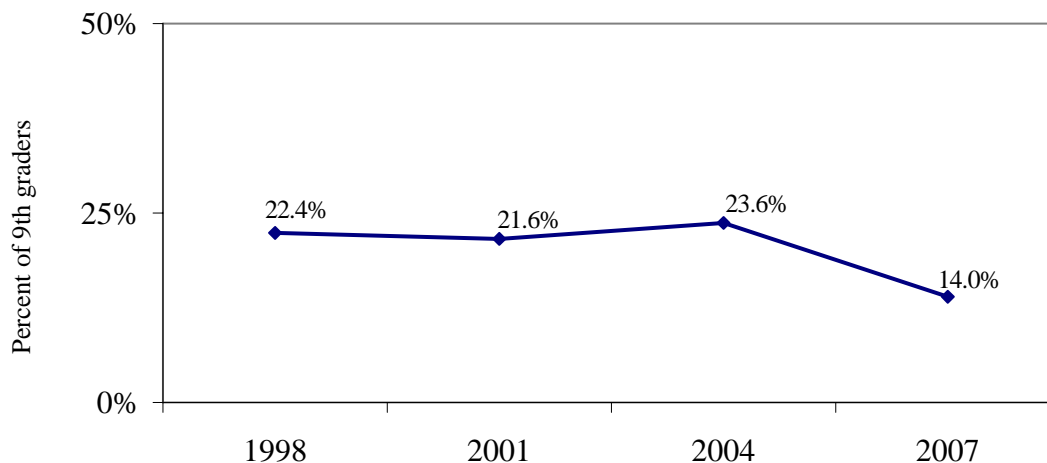
Figure 1. **Children Receiving Mental Health Services, Washington County, 2002-2006**



Unduplicated county of any clients age 17 or younger receiving county-administered mental health services and unduplicated count of children with Minnesota Health Care Plan paid claims who were not county-administered (state-funded programs).

Source: Minnesota Department of Human Services, Mental Health Management Reports

Figure 2. **9th Graders Having Suicidal Thoughts in the Past Year, Washington County, 1998-2007**



Source: 2007 Washington County Minnesota Student Survey Trends Report
Washington County Department of Public Health & Environment

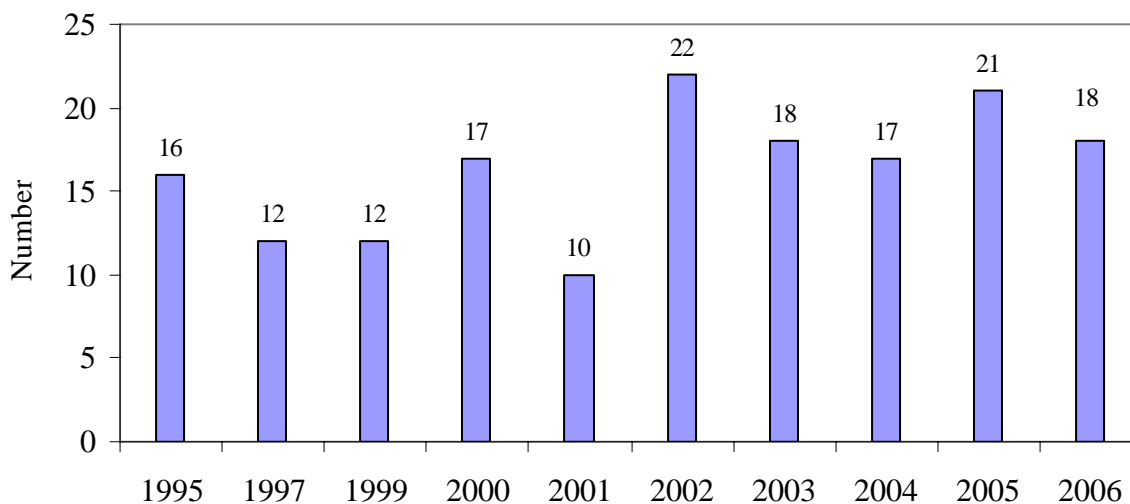
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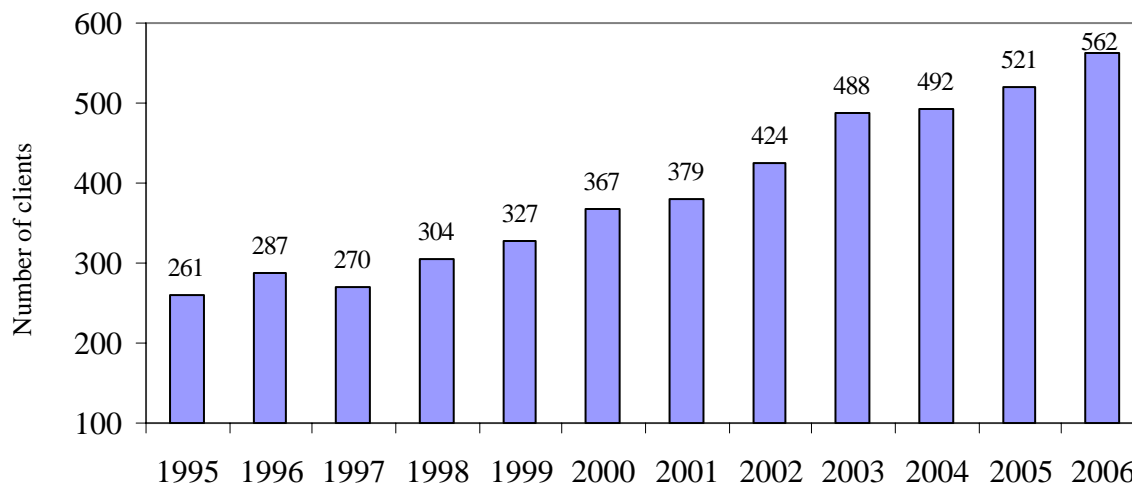
Key Data

Figure 3. **Total Annual Suicides, Washington County, 1995-2006**



Source: Minnesota Department of Health, Minnesota County Health Tables

Figure 4. **Adult Mental Health Case Management Clients, Washington County, 1995-2006**



Unduplicated count of any clients age 18 or older receiving Rule 79 county-administered mental health services and unduplicated count of children with Minnesota Health Care Plan paid claims who were not county-administered (state-funded programs).

Source: Minnesota Department of Human Services, Mental Health Management Reports

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Key Data

Figure 5.

Hospital Discharge Rate for Mental Disorders, Washington County, By Age, 2003-2007					
Discharge Rate per 1,000 Persons					
Age	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
5-14	2.80	2.83	2.28	1.72	2.31
15-19	13.33	14.58	13.21	12.27	12.43
20-24	14.23	12.05	8.69	7.74	10.04
25-44	7.54	7.52	7.99	7.71	7.23
45-64	4.99	4.51	5.71	5.05	5.17
65-74	4.93	2.81	5.34	4.3	4.74
75-84	11.07	8.53	6.16	6.98	9.75
85+	15.10	18.02	13.99	21.37	17.22
All Ages County	6.40	6.22	6.31	5.87	6.09
All Ages State	7.86	8.09	8.08	8.02	7.78

Source: Minnesota Hospital Association

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Figure 6.

Five Leading Causes* of Hospitalization by Age, Washington County, 2007

Age	Cause	Percent of All Hospital Discharges	Percent of All Hospital Days
5-14	Injury & Poisoning	19.16%	11.05%
	Mental Disorders	14.37%	27.34%
	Diseases of the Respiratory System	13.97%	10.39%
	Diseases of the Digestive System	11.78%	6.11%
	Diseases of the Nervous System & Sense Organs	7.78%	6.62%
15-19	Mental Disorders	25.89%	44.20%
	Complications of Pregnancy, Childbirth & the Puerperium ¹	20.24%	12.88%
	Injury & Poisoning	17.21%	15.56%
	Diseases of the Digestive System	11.56%	6.12%
	Diseases of the Genitourinary ² System	3.81%	2.14%
20-24	Complications of Pregnancy, Childbirth & the Puerperium ¹	46.68%	30.62%
	Mental Disorders	15.85%	36.94%
	Injury & Poisoning	10.17%	11.06%
	Diseases of the Digestive System	8.14%	5.28%
	Endocrine, Nutritional & Metabolic Diseases, & Immunity Disorders	3.75%	1.53%
25-44	Complications of Pregnancy, Childbirth & the Puerperium ¹	45.98%	34.93%
	Mental Disorders	9.05%	21.09%
	Diseases of the Digestive System	8.56%	9.50%
	Injury & Poisoning	6.30%	7.65%
	Diseases of the Genitourinary ² System	6.11%	4.11%

¹ Period during childbirth and up to six weeks after childbirth.

² Pertaining to the genital or urinary organs.

Source: Minnesota Hospital Association

*Discharges grouped using the AHRQ - Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality, Clinical Classification Software (CCS)

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Community Assets

- ◆ A variety of mental health providers in the county and metro area.
 - ◆ Work of the on-going Washington County Teen Health Fund activities for mental health, depression and suicide prevention in youth
 - ◆ Teen Health Fund, within the Mental Wellness Initiative-Washington County
 - ◆ Increased mental health awareness and education activities in the county
 - ◆ Percentage of youth reporting suicidal thoughts between 2004 and 2007 decreased for all ages for both males and females.
 - ◆ The Children's Mental Health Collaborative which bridges work between agencies such as special education in schools, Washington County Department of Community Services and Corrections, Mental Wellness Initiative-Washington County and agencies
 - ◆ Efforts toward increasing the availability of affordable housing in the county
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Community Gaps and Risks

- ◆ An increasing number of children and adults receiving county mental health services
- ◆ The on-going challenges in addressing the needs of youth ages 18-21 transitioning from children's systems of care to adult systems of care, for example loss of coverage under a parent's health insurance
- ◆ Limited housing and transportation options for the mentally ill adult population
- ◆ Gaps in the continuity of care from less costly prevention measures such as education and assessment to treatment and aftercare
- ◆ Shortage of psychiatrists, particularly child psychiatrists, as well as hospital psychiatric beds

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Summary

Death, disability and injury are the potential individual costs for untreated mental illnesses. Mental disorders for all ages are a leading cause of disability in the U.S. The disease burden from mental illness is even greater than that from cancer. The stigma of child and adult mental health and suicide prevention services continues to hinder access to effective treatment. Untreated mental health problems can be very costly to families, communities, and the health care system. When untreated, these problems can lead to school failure, family conflicts, drug abuse, violence, and even suicide. Mental illness is very treatable and the right treatments save lives and money.

Sources

- ¹ National Institute of Mental Health
- ² National Alliance on Mental Illness
- ³ *Mental Health: A Report of the Surgeon General*. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 1999, Rockville, MD.
- ⁴ <http://mentalhealth.samhsa.gov/topics/explore/treatment/>
- ⁵ National Stigma Clearinghouse, 2000, www.iso.gmu.edu
- ⁶ Innerworkings: A Look at Mental Health Issues in the Workplace" survey from Partnership for Workplace Mental Health 2007
- ⁷ Minnesota Council of Health Plans
- ⁸ Minnesota Department of Health
- ⁹ World Health Organization, *Lancet* 370(9590):851-58
- ¹⁰ National Mental Health Awareness Campaign