



WHAT IS MENTAL ILLNESS

*Provided through the Marketing and Development Committee
of the Association of Community Mental Health Centers of Kansas*

WHAT IS MENTAL ILLNESS?

A mental illness is a disease that causes mild to severe disturbances in thought and/or behavior. Symptoms may include changes in mood, personality, personal habits and/or social withdrawal. Coping with everyday situations becomes stressful.

People with
mental illnesses
make valuable
contributions to
society.

Most people believe that mental disorders are rare and “happen to someone else.” Mental illness is more common than people realize with more than 200 classified forms of mental illness. Some of the more common disorders are depression, bipolar disorder, dementia, schizophrenia and anxiety.



SIGNS IN CHILDREN

- Changes in school performance
- Poor grades despite strong efforts
- Excessive worry or anxiety (refusing to go to bed or school)
- Hyperactivity
- Persistent nightmares
- Persistent disobedience or aggression
- Frequent temper tantrums



SIGNS IN PRE-ADOLESCENTS

- Substance abuse
- Inability to cope with problems and daily activities
- Changes in eating and/or sleeping
- Complaints of physical ailments
- Defiance of authority, truancy, theft, and/or vandalism
- Intense fear of weight gain
- Prolonged negative mood
- Thoughts of death
- Frequent outbursts of anger

SIGNS IN ADULTS

- Social withdrawal
- Confused thinking
- Prolonged depression
- Feelings of extreme highs and lows
- Excessive fears, worries and anxieties
- Changes in eating and/or sleeping
- Strong feelings of anger
- Delusions or hallucinations
- Inability to cope with daily problems
- Complaints of physical ailments
- Suicidal thoughts
- Substance abuse

Discrimination against people with mental illnesses keeps them from seeking help.

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STIGMA AND MENTAL ILLNESS

In years past, people tended to associate mental health services with persons who suffered from major psychiatric problems. Today this misconception is disappearing, as people come to realize that good mental health is every bit as important as good physical health. In fact, the two go hand-in-hand. It is now commonplace for physicians, teachers, employers and even advice columnists to recommend therapy or counseling services for a multitude of life's everyday problems. Almost everyone has occasions when they could benefit from outside assistance with a problem they are facing. Problems range from parenting, marriage, coping with loss, depression, anxiety, or just handling a stressful situation at work.



People with mental illnesses have the same needs as everyone else.

TREATMENT

According to a comprehensive study of mental illness in this country, half of all chronic cases of psychological disorders begin by age fourteen, and three-quarters begin by age twenty-four. Anxiety disorders tend to begin in late childhood. Mood disorders that interfere with the ability to accomplish major social, academic, and occupational milestones, start in late adolescence. For nearly all mental disorders, researchers found that individuals delayed getting treatment for a median delay of about 10 years. Fear and anxiety are reasons individuals delay seeking help. Delays range from six to eight years for mood disorders, and 20 to 23 years for social phobia. Early diagnosis, treatment and intervention can avert a host of problems down the road.



Seriously mentally ill persons are treated in the community because it is the natural thing to do and because medical technology is available for treatment success. It is important to remember that there is hope for recovery, and that with treatment many people with mental illness maintain a productive and fulfilling life.

Discrimination against people with mental illnesses violates their basic human rights.

MORE INFORMATION

**Southeast
Kansas
Mental Health
Center**



Mental Health Matters

Toll Free 866-973-2241

www.sekmhc.org

Chanute, 402 S. Kansas, 620-431-7890

Fort Scott, 212 State, 620-223-5030

Garnett, 519 S. Elm, 785-448-6806

Humboldt, 1106 S. 9th, 620-473-2241

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