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New Oakland NEWS

Spring 2020, Issue 35

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Overcoming the Stigma of Mental Illness

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- **Don't let stigma create self-doubt and shame.** Stigma doesn't just come from others. You may mistakenly believe that your condition is a sign of personal weakness or that you should be able to control it without help. Seeking counseling, educating yourself about your condition and connecting with others who have mental illness can help you gain self-esteem and overcome destructive self-judgment.
- **Don't isolate yourself.** If you have a mental illness, you may be reluctant to tell anyone about it. Your family, friends, clergy or members of your community can offer you support if they know about your mental illness. Reach out to people you trust for the compassion, support and understanding you need.
- **Don't equate yourself with your illness.** You are not an illness. So instead of saying "I'm bipolar," say "I have bipolar disorder." Instead of calling yourself "a schizophrenic," say "I have schizophrenia."



- **Join a support group.** Some local and national groups, such as the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI), offer local programs and internet resources that help reduce stigma by educating people who have mental illness, their families and the general public. Some state and federal agencies and programs, such as those that focus on vocational rehabilitation and the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), offer support for people with mental illness.

- **Get help at school.** If you or your child has a mental illness that affects learning, find out what plans and programs might help. Discrimination against students because of a mental illness is against the law, and educators at primary, secondary and college levels are required to accommodate students as best they can. Talk to teachers, professors or administrators about the best approach and resources. If a teacher doesn't know about a student's disability, it can lead to discrimination, barriers to learning and poor grades.
 - **Speak out against stigma.** Consider expressing your opinions at events, in letters to the editor or on the internet. It can help instill courage in others facing similar challenges and educate the public about mental illness.
- Others' judgments almost always stem from a lack of understanding rather than information based on facts. Learning to accept your condition and recognize what you need to do to treat it, seeking support, and helping educate others can make a big difference.

Let's Put an End to the Persistent Problem of Mental Health Stigma



by **Kim Smith, LMSW**
Clinical Director
New Oakland Family Centers

Happy spring, everyone! It's finally here. (I think.)

This edition of New Oakland News looks at the persistent problem of the social stigma that still faces the many, many people who face mental illness and seek care.

The false beliefs of mental health stigma are obviously just wrong. In no other area of health care can you imagine there would be any kind of social disapproval related to needing care.

But worse than being just wrong, stigma is also very, very harmful. The statistics tell us that mental illness and mental health care are more prevalent than almost any other kind of health care. Suicide is the second leading cause of death among people aged 10-34.

But despite the large number of people who experience mental illness every year, only about half seek and receive treatment. The other half try to ignore their needs and "tough it out."

That's a rate of care that is much lower than it should be . . . and much lower than we find in other kinds of healthcare areas — high blood pressure, heart disease, diabetes, cancer and others.

Why are only half of the people who need care receiving care? A big part of the reason is stigma — the belief that seeking help is a sign of weakness.

No one would ever think that getting care for a broken arm or high fever was a sign of weakness. But with mental health, it's a perception battle we still all face every day.

Spring is a season of renewal and promise. Let's make this spring a time where we all resolve to do our best to end the stigma that still surrounds mental illness!

Rewriting the Narrative on Mental Health Stigma



by Phillip Pittman, PhD
Education Consultant
New Oakland Family Centers

Far too many people avoid seeking help for mental and emotional health concerns. In fact, according to the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI), 1 in 5 U.S. adults experiences mental illness, yet the average person waits a staggering 11 years on average before they get treatment. And, those are the people who actually get care. Even worse, approximately half of the people with serious mental health challenges are not receiving any form of treatment.

In many cases, people fear the negative judgments of their acquaintances, friends, and family members for having a mental illness and seeking outside help. They perhaps have been told that they should just try harder and control symptoms, or that they are “going through a phase” that will pass on its own.

This can often lead people to feel shame for having a mental illness. They internalize a negative self-image, viewing themselves as having somehow failed.

These social and self-stigmas are based on misinformation, misconceptions, stereotypes, and prejudices. But they can still have a profound limiting effect on people and the decisions they make.

As a society, we do not stigmatize physical health conditions in the same way. Even though the brain is the

most important organ in they body, we somehow think that issues that affect our brains are less “real” than our sprained ankles and our common colds.

The good news is that we do not have to give in to stigmas. In fact, we can all play a significant role in undoing the stigmas surrounding mental illness and mental health care.

There are many positive steps you can take to overcome stigma. It’s important to show empathy and compassion towards yourself and others. It’s also important to educate yourself and others about mental health concerns and the associated treatments.



If you or someone you care about is facing a mental health challenge, help them (or yourself!) get the professional support you need. Connect with positive people and remember that no person is defined by his or her illness.

As caring, trusted members of our communities, we must each take on a leadership role to model acceptance for all people, including those who suffer from mental and emotional health challenges. We don’t always share our own struggles, just like we don’t always know the struggles that others are going through. That’s why it’s so important that we openly communicate our support.

In short, it starts with the courage to talk openly about mental health, whether that means your own needs or those of someone you care about.

April Training Event to Focus on Mental Health in Schools

On Friday, April 24, New Oakland will host the next in its series of continuing education events for mental health professionals at the **Michigan State University Management Education Center (MEC)** in Troy.

Entitled, “**Mental Health in the Learning Environment: A Guide for Clinical and Education Professionals**,” the session will focus on the strategies and tools educators can use to manage mental health in the classroom . . . and the ways mental health professionals can work more collaboratively and constructively with educators.

The session will feature presentations from **Dr. Jessica Cohen, PhD, teacher consultant with the Walled Lake School District and a recognized expert on behavioral health factors in education**; and **Dr. Phillip Pittman, PhD, a career educator, school administrator and currently education consultant with New Oakland Family Centers**.

The April 24 event is approved for 4.0 CEUs by the Michigan Social Work Continuing Education Collaborative. Cost to attend is only \$35 and includes all materials, breakfast and break-time refreshments.

To register for the Apr. 24 event, visit www.NewOakland.eventbrite.com and click the “Tickets” button; or contact us by phone at **800-395-3223**.

800-395-3223: One Number for All Your New Oakland Needs

New Oakland is excited to announce a new and better way to manage all your contact with our teams.

Whether it’s your appointment schedule, a prescription refill, a question about billing, or any other need, you can now reach out for all New Oakland-related information and service by calling:

800-395-3223
(FACE)

We have boosted the capability of our talented team of call center service representatives and improved response times so you can get the answers you need, when you need them.

Christina Polk, LMSW, New Oakland’s Director of Clinical Resources has been leading the charge to develop a better customer service experience for all New Oakland clients.

“Our goal is to make sure all your contacts with New Oakland are as smooth and helpful as they can be,” Christina said.

When you dial 800-395-3223 (FACE) you will reach a menu of options that can take you where you want to go for the kind of support you need.

PRESS 1 for new appointments or to change existing appointments

PRESS 2 for billing concerns/questions

PRESS 3 for medical records

PRESS 4 for prescription refills

PRESS 5 for location addresses and FAX numbers

At any time, you can also enter the extension of the person you are trying to reach — or touch zero (“0”) to reach a member of our call center team.

Mental Health: Overcoming the Stigma of Mental Illness

False beliefs about mental illness can cause significant problems. Learn what you can do about stigma



From MayoClinic.org posted May 24, 2017. Reprinted with permission.

Stigma is when someone views you in a negative way because you have a distinguishing characteristic or personal trait that’s thought to be, or actually is, a disadvantage (a negative stereotype). Unfortunately, negative attitudes and beliefs toward people who have a mental health condition are common.

Stigma can lead to discrimination. Discrimination may be obvious and direct, such as someone making a negative remark about your mental illness or your treatment.

Or it may be unintentional or subtle, such as someone avoiding you because the person assumes you could be unstable, violent or dangerous due to your mental illness. You may even judge yourself. Some of the harmful effects of stigma can include:

- Reluctance to seek help or treatment

- Lack of understanding by family, friends, co-workers or others
- Fewer opportunities for work, school or social activities or trouble finding housing
- Bullying, physical violence or harassment
- Health insurance that doesn’t adequately cover your mental illness treatment
- The belief that you’ll never succeed at certain challenges or that you can’t improve your situation

Steps to cope with stigma

Here are some ways you can deal with stigma:

- **Get treatment.** You may be reluctant to admit you need treatment. Don’t let the fear of being labeled with a mental illness prevent you from seeking help. Treatment can provide relief by identifying what’s wrong and reducing symptoms that interfere with your work and personal life.

continued on next page

Meet Lindsey Hollinger, LMSW: New Oakland’s Clinical Supervisor in Ann Arbor



www.NewOakland.org

Lindsey Hollinger, LMSW is Clinical Supervisor at New Oakland’s Ann Arbor location (501 N. Maple Rd., Ann Arbor, MI 48103).

In her role, she oversees daily management of our outpatient and **FACE to FACE** partial hospital program (PHP) programs in Ann Arbor.

Since joining New Oakland two years ago, Lindsey has served as a therapist and senior therapist supporting the FACE

to FACE program at both New Oakland’s Ann Arbor and Southgate locations.

Lindsey says the core of her commitment to mental health care is a desire to help clients make develop in ways that that change lives.

“I became a mental health professional because I wanted to be a part of helping people achieve positive change earlier in their lives. That’s why I am really passionate about working

with teens and young adults. Helping clients move forward in their lives is what our profession is all about.”

“Throughout my time with New Oakland, I have really felt the kind of support I need to be successful and I really feel like a valued member of the team,” Lindsey says.

Lindsey received her Bachelors Degree in Social work from Michigan State University and her Masters in Social Work from the University of Houston.

New Oakland locations to serve you

Ann Arbor Center
501 N. Maple Road
Ann Arbor, MI 48103

Center Line Center
26522 Van Dyke Avenue
Center Line, MI 48015

Clarkston Center
6549 Town Center Drive
Clarkston, MI 48346

Clinton Township Center
42669 Garfield Road
Clinton Township, MI 48038

Farmington Hills Center
32961 Middlebelt Road
Farmington Hills, MI 48334

Flint Center
2401 South Linden, Suite A
Flint, MI 48532

Grand Rapids Center
2401 South Linden, Suite A
Flint, MI 48532

Livonia Center
31500 Schoolcraft Road
Livonia, MI 48150

Okemos Center
2300 Jolly Oak Road
Okemos, MI 48864

Port Huron Center
2300 Jolly Oak Road
Okemos, MI 48864

Southfield Center
20505 W. 12 Mile Road
Southfield, MI 48076

Southgate Center
13305 Reeck Road
Southgate, MI 48195

Warren Center
8150 E. 13 Mile Road
Warren, MI 48093

FACE to FACE Crisis Services
877-800-1650
(24 hours/day)

www.NewOakland.org