

# A Prayer for Greater Mental Health Awareness

## Praying for Peace and Justice on April 27, 2024

Let us pray–

Holy one, we ask that you help us all be more aware of the role that mental health plays in each of our lives and that the providers, organizations, systems that are tasked to help us continue to lead and grow strong in their efforts. Amen

### Background

May is almost here and **May is Mental Health Awareness** month. Most of you know that I've been in the children's mental health field for most of my career either as a special education teacher, a program administrator for young children, or as a policy developer. So...let's reflect together this morning about mental health and its importance to our overall health and wellness.

I bet everyone here knows a friend, family member, colleague, student, or child or teen, or themselves who has experienced a mental health episode at some point in their life. We know that:

**Fact:** Mental health issues can affect anyone. In 2020, about:

- One in 5 American adults experienced a mental health condition in a given year
- One in 6 young people have experienced a major

depressive episode

- One in 20 Americans have lived with a serious mental illness, such as schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, or major depression

**Fact:** Ethnic/racial minorities often bear a disproportionately high burden of disability resulting from mental health disorder.

- Individuals from racial/ethnic minority groups are less likely to receive MH care (48% white, 31% blacks and Hispanic, 22% Asian).
- Barriers to services for this population include: lack of or under insurance, stigma, lack of diverse providers, language barriers, distrust of the health care system.

**Fact:** Even very young children may show early warning signs of mental health concerns. These mental health conditions are often clinically diagnosable and can be a product of the interaction of biological, psychological, and social factors.

Half of all mental health disorders show first signs before a person turns 14-years-old, and three-quarters of mental health disorders begin before age 24.

Unfortunately, only half of children and adolescents with diagnosable mental health conditions receive the treatment they need. Early mental health support can help a child before problems interfere with other developmental needs.

So....while many of us have worked to increase our knowledge and develop new policies in the mental health field over the years, we also recognize that we have far to go. One strategy which has been created is to increase public awareness about

mental and substance use disorder and wellness.

For more than 20 years, the Federal government through its agency Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) has recognized **Mental Health Awareness Month (MHAM) every May** to increase awareness about the vital role mental health plays in our overall health and well-being.

My prayer of Peace and Justice this morning is for **all the persons** (Adults and young people) who are either needing treatments or working in the area of policy or services of mental health continue to play a major role in spreading awareness and recognition of the importance of good mental health.

Data above is from SAMHSA – <https://www.samhsa.gov/data/> and the American Psychiatric Association—<https://www.psychiatry.org/psychiatrists/diversity/education/mental-health-facts>