National Prevention Strategy

MENTAL *and* EMOTIONAL WELL-BEING

Mental and emotional well-being is essential to overall health. Positive mental health allows people to realize their full potential, cope with the stresses of life, work productively, and make meaningful contributions to their communities. Early childhood experiences have lasting, measurable consequences later in life; therefore, fostering emotional well-being from the earliest stages of life helps build a foundation for overall health. Anxiety, mood (e.g., depression), and impulse control disorders are associated with a higher probability of risk behaviors (e.g., tobacco, alcohol, and other drug use; risky sexual behavior), intimate partner and family violence, many other chronic and acute conditions (e.g., obesity, diabetes, cardiovascular disease, HIV/STIs), and premature death.

NATIONAL PREVENTION STRATEGY

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Promote positive early childhood development, including positive parenting and violence-free homes.

2. Facilitate social connectedness and community engagement across the lifespan.

3. Provide individuals and families with the support necessary to maintain positive mental well-being.

4. Promote early identification of mental health needs and access to quality services.

ACTIONS: THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT WILL

▸ Improve access to high-quality mental health services and facilitate integration of mental health services into a range of clinical and community settings (e.g., Federally Qualified Health Centers; Bureau of Prisons, Department of Defense, and Veterans Affairs facilities).

▸ Support programs to ensure that employees have the tools and resources needed to balance work and personal life and provide support and training to help them recognize co-workers in distress and respond accordingly.

▸ Provide tools, guidance, and best practices to promote positive early childhood and youth development and prevent child abuse.

▸ Provide easy-to-use information about mental and emotional well-being for consumers, especially groups that experience unique stressors (e.g., U.S. Armed Forces, firefighters, police officers, and other emergency response workers).

▸ Research policies and programs that enhance mental and emotional well-being, especially for potentially vulnerable populations.

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ACTIONS: PARTNERS CAN

Individuals and Families

▸ Build strong, positive relationships with family and friends.

▸ Become more involved in the community (e.g., mentor or tutor youth, join a faith or spiritual community).

▸ Encourage children and adolescents to participate in extracurricular and out-of-school activities.

▸ Work to make sure children feel comfortable talking about problems, such as bullying, and seek appropriate assistance as needed.

Community, Nonprofit, and Faith-Based Organizations

▸ Provide space and organized activities (e.g., opportunities for volunteering) that encourage social participation and inclusion for all people, including older people and persons with disabilities.

▸ Support child and youth development programs (e.g., peer mentoring programs, volunteering programs) and promote inclusion of youth with mental, emotional, and behavioral problems.

▸ Train key community members (e.g., adults who work with the older adults, youth, and armed services personnel) to identify the signs of depression and suicide and refer people to resources.

▸ Expand access to mental health services (e.g., patient navigation, support groups) and enhance linkages between mental health, substance abuse, disability, and other social services.

Early Learning Centers, Schools, Colleges, and Universities

▸ Implement programs and policies to prevent abuse, bullying, violence, and social exclusion; build social connectedness; and promote positive mental and emotional health.

▸ Implement programs to identify risks and early indicators of mental, emotional, and behavioral problems among youth and ensure that youth with such problems are referred to appropriate services.

▸ Ensure students have access to comprehensive health services, including mental health and counseling services.

Health Care Systems, Insurers, and Clinicians

▸ Educate parents on normal child development and conduct early childhood interventions to enhance mental and emotional well-being and provide support (e.g., home visits for pregnant women and new parents).

▸ Screen for mental health needs among children and adults, especially those with disabilities and chronic conditions, and refer people to treatment and community resources as needed.

▸ Develop integrated care programs to address mental health, substance abuse, and other needs within primary care settings.

▸ Enhance communication and data sharing (with patient consent) with social services networks to identify and treat those in need of mental health services.

Businesses and Employers

▸ Implement organizational changes to reduce employee stress (e.g., develop clearly defined roles and responsibilities), and provide reasonable accommodations (e.g., flexible work schedules, assistive technology, adapted work stations).

▸ Ensure that mental health services are included as a benefit on health plans and encourage employees to use these services as needed.

▸ Provide education, outreach, and training to address mental health parity in employment-based health insurance coverage and group health plans.

State, Tribal, Local, and Territorial Governments

▸ Enhance data collection systems to better identify and address mental and emotional health needs.

▸ Include safe shared spaces for people to interact (e.g., parks, community centers) in community development plans, which can foster healthy relationships and positive mental health among community residents.

▸ Ensure that those in need, especially potentially vulnerable groups, are identified and referred to mental health services.

▸ Pilot and evaluate models of integrated mental and physical health in primary care, with particular attention to underserved populations and areas, such as rural communities.