

# CALIFORNIA STRATEGIC PLAN ON REDUCING MENTAL HEALTH STIGMA AND DISCRIMINATION



CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF  
Mental Health

# CALIFORNIA STRATEGIC PLAN ON REDUCING MENTAL HEALTH STIGMA AND DISCRIMINATION

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## **Based on Recommendations of the Mental Health Stigma and Discrimination Reduction Advisory Committee**

The *California Strategic Plan on Reducing Mental Health Stigma and Discrimination* was adopted by the Mental Health Services Oversight and Accountability Commission on June 25, 2009.



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Stigma and discrimination are long-standing issues within the mental health community. As community-based mental health programs and treatment models continue to expand, the need to address these issues and influence behaviors has never been more important.

The strategic directions and recommended actions enclosed in this plan embrace the vision of wellness and recovery as the cornerstone to eliminating stigma and discrimination. Raising awareness, utilizing peer-to-peer efforts, and establishing state and local partnerships with the mental health community are starting points to help California achieve an environment that embraces the importance of mental health as part of one's overall well-being.

This document was designed to serve as a roadmap to assist California in initiating and developing local and state efforts to achieve its goals. As time progresses and strategies are tested, this plan will not remain static, but rather evolve to encompass new ideas, successful models, and innovative strategies across California.

As you move forward implementing strategies, programs, and outreach efforts, I encourage you to communicate with those in and around your own community about your findings. The more dialogue we have on successes and challenges, the sooner we will eliminate stigma and discrimination in California.

To the members of the Advisory Committee, and to the many public participants who submitted their comments throughout the planning process, I congratulate you on a well-developed plan, and thank you, again, for your leadership and tireless efforts to make California an example state for all to follow.

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# VISION STATEMENT

*We envision physical and mental wellness for all Californians and a future where mental health labeling, stereotyping, and discrimination belong to the past.*

*We envision a future where people affected by mental health challenges are socially included, valued, and supported in their wellness and recovery, education, housing, employment, health care, and other needs in order to live a fulfilling and productive life.*

*This vision of mental wellness will emerge through raising awareness, education, and concerted action at all levels.*

# INTRODUCTION



According to the landmark 1999 United States Surgeon General Report, “Stigma is the most formidable obstacle to progress in the arena of mental illness and health.” People with mental health challenges often remark how stigma and discrimination against them can even be worse than their mental health condition. Stigma and discrimination can shatter hopes of recovery and social inclusion, leaving the person feeling devastated and socially and personally isolated. While there have been remarkable advances in understanding functions of the brain and

treating mental disorders in the last 50 years, stigma unfortunately continues to be a barrier to seeking needed treatment and related assistance for many individuals.

Stigma, exclusionary acts, and discrimination against those with mental health challenges are widespread. Nearly half of the adults in a nationally representative survey said they were unwilling to socialize with, work with, or live near people with mental health issues.<sup>1</sup> Additionally, it is estimated

*“We need to remember that individuals experiencing mental health challenges are human beings with dreams, who have resilience and the capacity for recovery.”*

– California Network of Mental Health Clients

that approximately 33 percent of children experiencing social, emotional, or behavioral difficulties have been the target of bullying in

# INTRODUCTION

schools.<sup>2</sup> The number of people affected by stigma is significant. In any given year, roughly one in every four adults will suffer from a diagnosable mental disorder, and nearly one out of every five children will experience some degree of an emotional or behavioral difficulty.<sup>3</sup>

Stigma, and the discrimination that can result from mental illness, can cause shame, despair, prejudice, and hopelessness. Self-stigma is estimated to influence between 50 and 60 percent of individuals with mental health challenges from seeking treatment, although other factors, such as the fear of involuntary treatment, may also lead others to avoid treatment.<sup>4</sup> Further, some parents avoid seeking help for their children due to fears that they or their children will be labeled and stigmatized. By rejecting or dropping out of mental health services, individuals can avoid taking on the stigmatizing label of mental

illness.<sup>5,6,7</sup> However, failure to seek help can often lead to fatal behavior: Ninety percent of individuals who die by suicide have a diagnosable mental health or substance abuse problem.<sup>8,9,10</sup> For society to benefit from the advancements of modern mental health interventions, we must deal with the effects of stigma and discrimination.

## *Envisioning Change*

The good news is that California is ready to fight stigma and discrimination associated with mental health challenges. Reducing this stigma and discrimination is a priority goal of the California Department of Mental Health (DMH) and the Mental Health Services Oversight and Accountability Commission (MHSOAC). In collaboration with the MHSOAC, the DMH convened the California Mental Health Stigma and Discrimination

*“Out of our desire for equality and dignity for people who face and overcome mental health challenges comes a vision of partnerships with community stakeholders at all levels, and a California that provides an environment of understanding, compassion, and awareness in which social justice, accountability, mutual support, and community collaborations have overcome the oppressions and hierarchies that once separated us, uplifting us all.”*

- California Network of Mental Health Clients

# INTRODUCTION

Reduction Advisory Committee to develop a ten-year strategic plan to accomplish this goal. This Committee consisted of a diverse group of individuals, including consumers, family members, advocates, providers, clinicians, experts, researchers, and representatives from various community-based, nonprofit, and government organizations.

*The California Strategic Plan on Reducing Mental Health Stigma and Discrimination* (Plan) crafts a vision that unfolds into four strategic directions and multiple recommended actions. The recommended actions address Californians of all ages and from diverse backgrounds, acknowledging that an individual experiencing a mental health challenge can maintain wellness. With California's increasing diversity and the fact that stigma and discrimination can take on many different forms, communities need strategies that are culturally and ethnically relevant to their local populations.<sup>11</sup> The Plan addresses prevention and early intervention activities, including public education and contact campaigns,

to confront the fundamental causes of stigmatizing attitudes and discriminatory and prejudicial actions. This ten-year Plan provides a blueprint for action at the local and state levels, as well as an informational resource for government, community-based organizations, consumer and family groups, and others. It serves as a tool for individuals, both within and outside of the mental health field, who are dedicated to ensuring the complete social inclusion of people of all ages living with mental health challenges.

The Plan begins with a discussion in Part 1 about stigma and discrimination related to mental health challenges. Part 2 discusses several strategies, approaches, and methods to reduce stigma and discrimination. Part 3 contains the Plan's core principles, strategic directions, recommended actions, and next steps that are necessary to reduce stigma and discrimination in California. Finally, the Plan includes references for the citations in the document, which serve as a rich resource.

# PART 1: REDUCING STIGMA AND DISCRIMINATION IN MENTAL HEALTH: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES



## ***What Are Stigma and Discrimination?***

Stigma refers to attitudes and beliefs that lead people to reject, avoid, or fear those they perceive as being different. Discrimination occurs when people and entities act upon these attitudes and beliefs in ways that can deprive others of their rights and life opportunities.<sup>12</sup> Discrimination can include behaviors that result in the exclusion or marginalization of others, as well as illegal acts of abuse or actions that deprive people of their civil rights, access to fair housing options, opportunities for employment, education, and full participation in civic life.

Three major categories of mental health-related stigma exist:

- “Public stigma” encompasses the attitudes and feelings expressed by many in the general public toward persons living with mental health challenges or their family members.
- “Institutional stigma” occurs when negative attitudes and behaviors about mental illness, including social, emotional, and behavioral problems, are incorporated into the policies, practices, and cultures of organizations and social systems, such as education, health care, and employment.
- “Self-stigma” occurs when individuals internalize the disrespectful images that society, a community, or a peer group perpetuate, which may lead many individuals to refrain from seeking treatment for their mental health conditions.

# PART 1: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Stigma is often reflected in commonly used language. Some of the synonyms and slang terms used to describe individuals with mental health challenges are among the first words young children use to discount other children they do not like, indicating how deeply entrenched stigmatization is in today's culture.<sup>13</sup> The use of clinical terms, such as a "schizophrenic" instead of the preferred phrase "an individual experiencing schizophrenia," also develop a stigmatizing effect for many mental health consumers who object to being defined by a diagnosis. This Plan attempts to use non-stigmatizing terms that mental health consumers prefer, although references to research studies discussed herein may use original terminology.

## Use of Non-Stigmatizing Terms

Even though the term "seriously emotionally disturbed" is recognized in the *California Code*, a qualitative survey (among parents and professionals) found that the preferred terms to use when describing symptoms of mental illness that children and their families experience are: 1) emotional and behavioral challenges, 2) emotional and behavioral disorders, or 3) a specific mental health diagnosis.<sup>14</sup>

## What Causes Stigma Against Those with Mental Health Difficulties?

Stigma often gets its start in thoughts and attitudes that negatively describe others considered to be different, which can lead to the creation of stereotypes. When people agree

with a negative stereotype, they may develop feelings of anger, pity, or fear toward others. These feelings may lead to behaviors, such as avoidance, rejection, scorn, discrimination, or abuse. Similarly, in

*Stigma often gets its start in thoughts and attitudes that negatively describe others considered to be different, which can lead to the creation of stereotypes.*

self-stigma, individuals or groups may believe stereotypes about themselves and develop feelings of shame, anger, hopelessness, or despair. As a result, individuals may refrain from seeking social support, employment, or treatment.<sup>15</sup> Common stigmatizing attitudes and actions expressed toward those living with mental health challenges include aversion or fear. Another common attitude portrays people with mental health challenges as childlike and needing to be cared for, which has led to forced treatment practices and policies. These attitudes can be further accentuated by the general lack of understanding about mental health conditions. In addition, stereotypical portrayals in movies and the news are influential in spreading fear and misunderstanding about persons living with a mental illness.<sup>16</sup>

Stigma and discrimination occur within our everyday social environment. Attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors about mental health

# PART 1: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

are influenced by family members, friends, and peers; through community settings, such as school, work, social networks, and cultural groups; and by public laws, governmental systems, institutions, and the economic conditions. One person may belong to

several different groups and experience varying stigmas within each cultural group. In developing and implementing stigma and discrimination reduction measures, it is important to consider the issue from these multiple lenses.

## 2007 Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System<sup>20</sup>

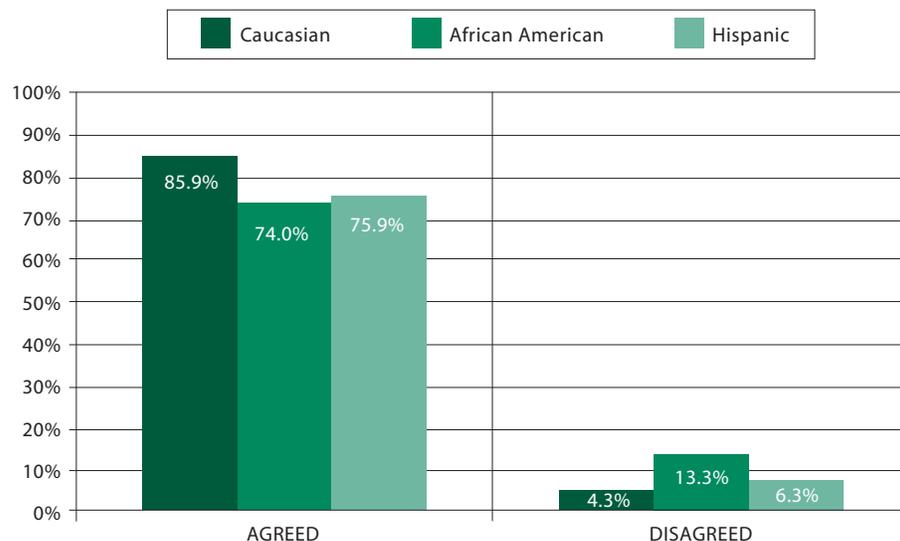
The Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System is a collaborative project of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and U.S. states and territories. The Surveillance System is an ongoing data collection program designed to measure behavioral risk factors in the adult population (18 years of age and older) living in households.

In 2007, two new optional mental illness and stigma questions were added to the survey. DMH contributed to the survey conducted by the California Department of Public Health and will use these data to assess attitudes and to recommend strategies for stigma reduction campaigns. 5,718 Californians participated in this survey. Additionally, these data will serve as a baseline to potentially assess the effectiveness of future programs.

In the survey respondents were asked to answer, "Do you agree slightly or strongly, or disagree slightly or strongly" to the following statements:

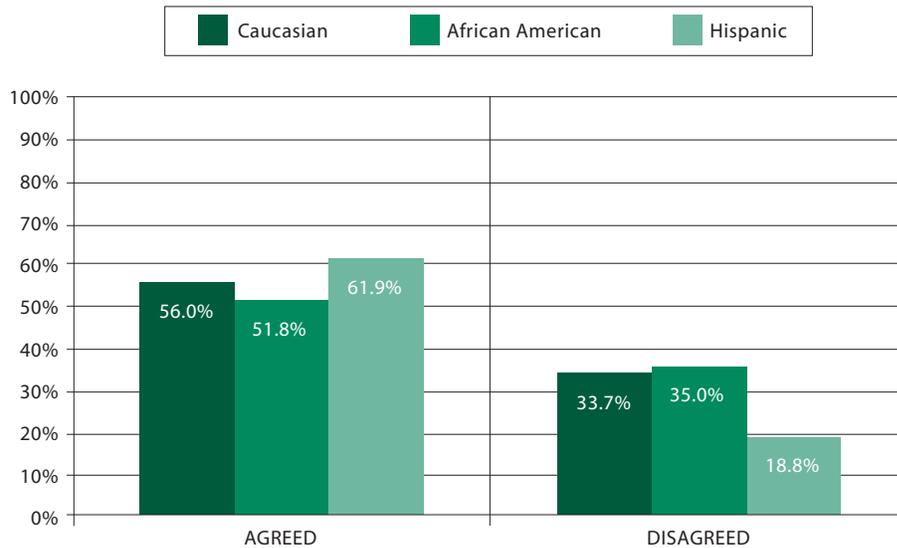
- Treatment can help people with mental illness lead normal lives.
- People are generally caring and sympathetic to people with mental illness.

**Figure 1. Treatment can help people with mental illness lead normal lives. Results by Race (2007)**

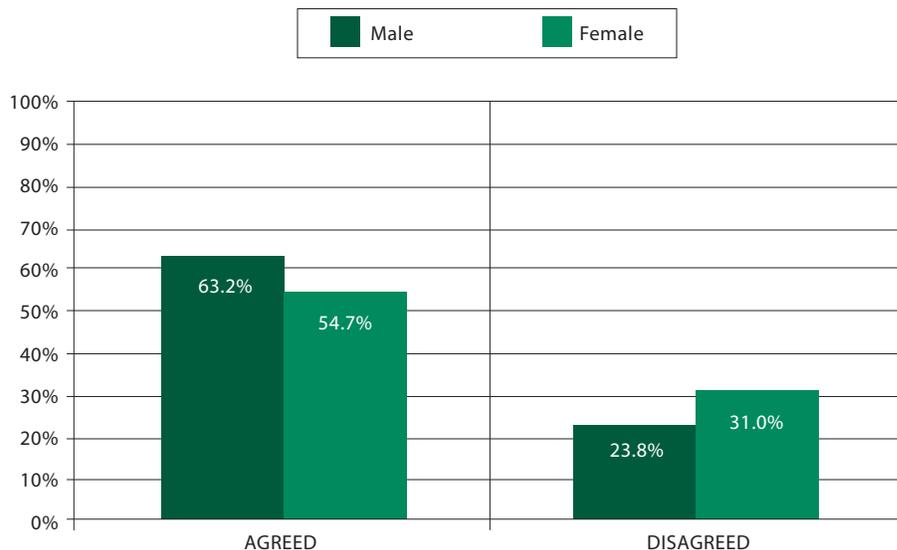


# PART 1: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

**Figure 2. People are generally caring and sympathetic to people with mental illness. Results by Race (2007)**



**Figure 3. People are generally caring and sympathetic to people with mental illness. Results by Gender (2007)**



**Note:** Results will not add to 100 percent due to non-display of the following responses: "Neither agree nor disagree," "don't know/not sure," and "refused." For race/ethnicity only, Caucasian, African American, and Hispanic are displayed. The fourth category, "Other," is not displayed. Results are weighted by age, race, sex, and the 2000 population.

# PART 1: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

## *How Stigma and Discrimination Are Experienced*

Each individual has varying degrees of susceptibility to stigma and discrimination. Some will experience limited degrees of self-stigma in response to societal pressures, while others may be impacted deeply, responding by withdrawing or feeling shame and/or anger.<sup>5</sup> Additional research is needed to understand why some individuals are more affected than others.

Looking at unique cultural approaches to stigma is particularly necessary in California as the state is anticipated to become even more diverse in the near future. California, according to 2007 estimates, is 44 percent Caucasian, 36 percent Hispanic, 12 percent Asian, and 6 percent African American, with Native Americans and Pacific Islanders each making up less than 1 percent of the population.<sup>17</sup>

Studies to date suggest that various racial or ethnic groups often experience and express stigma differently. In some Asian cultures, beliefs about mental illness can reflect poorly on the entire family, diminishing marriage and economic prospects for other family members.<sup>18</sup> One study has found that while Native Americans and Caucasians hold similar perceptions of the low levels of dangerousness for individuals experiencing a mental health challenge, Asians and Latinos perceive these individuals as being significantly more dangerous. The same study

also found that while increased contact with an individual experiencing a mental health challenge was associated with lower levels of perceived dangerousness among Caucasian respondents, the same association was not true for African American respondents.<sup>19</sup> More research is needed to better understand and address the attitudes and perceptions of different racial and ethnic groups.

## **Families, Friends, and Caregivers**

Stigma also affects the family members, companions, and co-workers of those living with mental health conditions. Family members and caregivers are frequently seen as responsible for a loved one's mental health challenge and treated with suspicion or disapproval. Parents, in particular, are often blamed for causing a child's

emotional difficulties, and they internalize that stigma, contributing to further isolation of the child and family members. This situation is known as "stigma by association." As a result, families and caregivers may ignore the mental health symptoms, or may have fears that impede the pursuit of early intervention services and support for the child and family. Studies have shown that some family members who do seek treatment report experiencing social stigma and stigmatizing attitudes from mental health professionals.<sup>21</sup> Family members affected may include parents, children, siblings, grandparents, and others close to individuals experiencing mental health challenges.

*Studies to date suggest that various racial or ethnic groups often experience and express stigma differently.*

# PART 1: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

## Children and Transition-Age Youth

Children under the age of 15 with serious social, emotional, or behavioral challenges may experience peer exclusion, social isolation, bullying, and other forms of abuse in both school and community settings. Their behaviors may contribute to poor academic and/or social functioning, which can further stigmatize a child. Mental health assessments and diagnoses that too often focus on weaknesses and problems exclusively, rather than addressing a child's strengths, interests, and goals, can exacerbate this problem.

Transition-age youth, ages 16 to 25, are also vulnerable to mental health stigma and discrimination, because at this stage, peer opinion and media messages are extremely influential. Seventy-five percent of all lifetime mental health disorders start by age 24.<sup>22</sup>

During this stressful period from ages 16 to 25, youth with social, emotional, or behavioral problems may transition from foster care, the juvenile justice system, or the children's mental health system into the world where adult service systems are their only option. When a youth turns 18, he or she has the right to refuse services, which may permanently reduce the likelihood of positive outcomes. At the same time, the sudden movement into the adult world or to an adult facility with little support can be terrifying for the youth and challenging for family members.<sup>23</sup> A recent study indicates that California college students in this age range are presenting mental health challenges with greater frequency and complexity.<sup>24</sup> At the University of California, San Diego, the number of psychiatric

hospital admittances more than doubled between the 2001-2002 and the 2004-2005 school years.<sup>25</sup>

## Addressing Multiple Stigmas

Many individuals, families, and communities experience the burdens of stigma and discrimination, including children and youth in special education or foster care; racial and ethnic communities; lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or questioning individuals; persons with physical disabilities; persons with co-occurring disorders; older adults; rural populations; and veterans.

## Youth in Foster Care

Children and adolescents in foster care who face mental health conditions and are in foster care experience multiple stigmas and barriers that are created by the complex foster system. An estimated 60 percent of children in California's foster care system have social, emotional, or behavioral challenges, often related to the trauma of neglect and abuse from family members or the foster care system itself.<sup>26</sup> In addition, these children often receive poor quality treatment from other child-serving agencies. According to a 2003 Little Hoover Commission report, youth in foster care are routinely denied adequate education, and mental and physical health care.<sup>27</sup>

## Racial and Ethnic Communities

The United States Surgeon General and the President's New Freedom Commission on Mental Health (Commission) have identified public stigma as a key factor in the lack of access to mental health services for racial and ethnic communities.<sup>28</sup> Problems include the lack of culturally competent services, such as language services; financial barriers;

# PART 1: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

and failure to respect and understand the histories, traditions, beliefs, and values of these communities. The Commission cited the significant underrepresentation of minority populations in the mental health workforce as another barrier to access. The Commission also stated that as a result of these factors, Native Americans, African Americans, Asians, Pacific Islanders, Hispanics, and other racial and ethnic minorities bear a disproportionately high burden of disability from mental illness – not because of a higher prevalence or severity of illness in these populations, but because they receive less care, inappropriate care, and poorer quality of care.

Racism and race-based prejudice and discrimination are stressful and adversely affect physical and mental health.<sup>29</sup> Individuals from ethnic and racial communities may encounter stigma and discrimination as they attempt to get help for their mental health conditions, often receiving differential treatment and poorer quality of care. Psychologists with research experience in Asian American culture have found that a strong correlation exists between both early and continuing experiences of racism, stereotyping, and the individual's mental health functioning.<sup>30</sup> Those who are underserved in the voluntary community system of mental health care, particularly African Americans and Native Americans, are overrepresented in involuntary inpatient hospitalization.<sup>31,32</sup> Children from diverse racial and ethnic communities tend to receive mental health services through juvenile justice and child welfare systems more often than through schools or mental health settings.<sup>33</sup> Some communities, such as the Hispanic community, are underrepresented in their use of mental health services. This community also experiences significant barriers to treatment, including language barriers and a lack of culturally competent procedures. Often,

they may seek treatment in non-mental health arenas, such as medical clinics or faith-based organizations.<sup>34</sup>

Despite experiencing multiple stigmas, some racial and ethnic communities may have certain culturally protective factors that can help counter stigma and the stresses of mental health conditions. These factors may include supportive families, strong community networks, spirituality, and religion, such as the strong inter-family connections in the Hispanic community and the strong inter-generational living situations of the Hmong community.

## **Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Questioning (LGBTQ) Community**

Studies have shown that the LGBTQ community has an increased risk for depression, substance abuse, and suicide.<sup>35</sup> The significant social stigmas and discrimination that lesbian and gay people experience may also place them at greater risk for psychological distress.<sup>36</sup>

The LGBTQ community is also at high risk for becoming victims of physical violence and harassment, particularly in non-urban areas. LGBTQ youth may face harassment and possible abuse from family and peers, and these youth are particularly vulnerable when they first go public with their sexual orientation or gender identity. LGBTQ older adults may avoid accessing health and social services due to concerns about insensitive and discriminatory treatment. Compared to heterosexual seniors, LGBTQ seniors are more likely to live alone and less likely to have a caregiver should they become ill.<sup>37</sup> These factors can increase feelings of isolation and loneliness, which are risk factors for depression later in life.

# PART 1: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Until 1973, the American Psychiatric Association's Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM) defined homosexuality as a mental illness. The manual continues to include multiple categories that define non-heteronormative gender identity as a mental illness, compounding the difficulties that children, teens, and adults with non-conforming gender identities experience in the mental health system.

## Persons with Physical Disabilities

Individuals with physical disabilities, in addition to having mental health challenges, face multiple stigmas and a greater degree of stigma and discrimination. In addition, the greater the degree of stigma they reported experiencing, the more likely they were to also report poor health or poor emotional well-being.<sup>38</sup>

## Persons with Co-Occurring Disorders

Individuals who experience a mental illness in addition to an addiction, i.e., a co-occurring disorder, such as alcohol or substance abuse or an addiction to gambling, face multiple stigmas. Studies show high rates of stigmatizing attitudes among the public toward those with drug- or alcohol-related disorders.<sup>1</sup> Systemic discrimination against individuals with co-occurring disorders also exists. Too often, individuals living with co-

occurring disorders are treated for only one of the two disorders. Only 19 percent of people

experiencing both a substance dependency and a serious mental illness are treated for both disorders; 29 percent are not treated for either.<sup>39</sup> It is also common that when people are treated for both

disorders, their treatment is not coordinated, reducing its effectiveness.

## Older Adults

Growing older and experiencing a mental illness at the same time can impose barriers to improving one's mental and physical wellness and living an active life. Common stereotypes held by the public, professionals, family members, and older adults themselves include the belief that depression is a normal part of aging, or that people can be too old to recover from a mental illness.<sup>40</sup> Because of such attitudes, mental illness in older adults may not be identified and treated, or older adults may avoid seeking mental health services. About 20 percent of persons 55 and older experience specific mental disorders not considered part of "normal" aging. However, older adults have a low rate of mental health service use, with only 15 percent of those needing services receiving them.<sup>41</sup> Other reasons that older adults do not seek help can include a lack of necessary transportation or financial hardship. Untreated depression is a significant risk factor for suicide in the elderly, and older adults are disproportionately more likely to die by suicide.<sup>32</sup>

*Untreated depression is a significant risk factor for suicide in the elderly, and older adults are disproportionately more likely to die by suicide.*

# PART 1: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

## Rural Populations

In rural areas, access to adequate mental health services can be more problematic, and the social stigma of accessing such services can be greater than in urban areas. This is reflected in one study that found that older men and Native American youth who live in rural areas experience a significantly higher suicide rate than their counterparts in urban areas.<sup>28</sup>

Many individuals living in rural areas may be required to travel long distances for services, and even when services are available, the individuals may not be able to afford them. These individuals often have low or insufficient incomes, are single parents, lack employment opportunities, and lack access to community resources and opportunities for receiving mental health assistance.<sup>42</sup> Furthermore, many rural areas do not have colleges and universities to provide sufficient numbers of qualified mental health professionals. Although NIMBYism (not in my back yard) is a system-wide challenge, rural areas often experience greater organizational challenges that urban populations and interest groups have been able to overcome. In recognizing the issues parity in mental health services between rural and urban areas, the Office of Rural Mental Health Policy was created at the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH), and the Office of Rural Health Policy was created at the Health Resources and Services Administration.<sup>43</sup>

## Veterans/Military

California has one of the highest populations of veterans in the country. Active-duty military personnel have significantly higher rates of major depression, generalized anxiety, and post-traumatic stress disorder than the general population; as many as 17 percent of those

stationed in Iraq and Afghanistan met the criteria for one of those three conditions. Of those military personnel, less than 40 percent sought mental health care, and many reported being concerned about stigma and discrimination because of their mental health challenges.<sup>44</sup> Many current members of the military believe that seeking treatment for mental health challenges may jeopardize their careers. Returning veterans face challenges in navigating the Veteran Administration (VA) system to access mental health services. Homelessness is a particular concern of the veteran community. The VA estimates that approximately one-third of all adults who are homeless are veterans, and that nearly half of all homeless veterans have mental health challenges.<sup>45</sup> Homelessness in itself is highly stigmatizing, resulting in many homeless veterans with mental health issues facing a dual stigma.

## *What Are the Impacts of Stigma and Discrimination?*

### Public and Institutional Stigma and Discrimination

Individuals with mental health problems may struggle with personal, professional, and cultural relationships tainted by stigma and discrimination in almost every facet of daily life. They may find themselves without the circle of friends, family, and social networks that would typically provide camaraderie, joy, and support. Further, members of their support network, including family members, also experience stigma in the form of avoidance, blame, and social exclusion.

Children with social, emotional, or behavioral challenges may find themselves routinely treated differently than other children by the adults who work with them and by their peers. This social avoidance may take the form of exclusion,

# PART 1: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

taunting, shaming, bullying, and physical abuse from peers or the community at large. In one study, 33 percent of children with special needs who attended mainstream schools were targets of bullying, compared to eight percent of their classmates.<sup>46</sup> Studies show that childhood isolation and resulting depression are also on the rise.<sup>2</sup>

Adults with mental illness may be victimized in other ways. They are at a much higher risk of being victims of violent crime than the general population.<sup>13</sup> Contrary to stereotypes, research suggests that individuals with mental health challenges are more likely to be victims than aggressors.<sup>47,48</sup>

Stigma and discrimination may interfere with the ability of individuals living with mental health challenges to obtain housing and find or stay employed, despite their ability to do the work. One in three mental health consumers reported being turned down for a job once their status became known. In some cases, job offers were rescinded when a history of mental health challenges was revealed.<sup>49,50</sup> These difficulties can increase the likelihood of becoming homeless. In 2000, an estimated 75,000 Californians with mental health challenges needed housing.<sup>51</sup>

Additionally, stigma and discrimination may prevent individuals with mental health diagnoses from participating fully in civic life: 44 states, including California, have constitutional language taking away the voting rights of individuals if they are found to be “mentally incompetent.”<sup>52</sup> Under California’s Election Code, this prohibition applies to those who have a conservator, and to those judged not competent to stand trial.

## Self-Stigma

Experiencing the effects of stigma and discrimination can prompt feelings of low self-esteem, shame, anger, hopelessness, and helplessness and can fuel the cycle of self-stigma. Hopelessness and despair can lead individuals to take their lives.

To avoid the stigma of being labeled with a mental illness, many individuals may refrain from seeking treatment for their mental health conditions, whether for themselves, their children, or another family member. Fewer than 30 percent of people with mental health challenges seek treatment, according to a large-scale epidemiological study.<sup>32,53</sup> It should be noted, however, that stigma is not the sole reason individuals do not seek or continue treatment. Other factors may include historical trauma faced by ethnic and racial communities, or the difficulty of accessing affordable treatment.<sup>54</sup>

Once again, while there are many anecdotes and first-person accounts of living with stigma and discrimination, research to date has not yet calculated the economic burden of these social and systemic pressures in terms of unemployment, homelessness, and school dropout rates.

## Stigma Impacts the Mental Health Field

According to the United States Surgeon General, another result of stigma is the public’s reluctance to fund mental health programs and systems.<sup>32</sup> The public has generally ranked insurance coverage for mental health challenges below that for physical illnesses.<sup>55</sup> This situation may be changing for the better. California voters passed Proposition 63, the Mental Health Services Act, in 2004, and in September 2008 Congress enacted Mental Health Parity legislation that requires

# PART 1: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

health insurance carriers and employers to provide equal treatment coverage for mental health consumers.

## ***Where Do Stigma and Discrimination Occur?***

Stigma and discrimination occur in the community, workplace, and schools. Individuals encounter social exclusion and difficulties finding or keeping housing or employment and participating in school functions.

*Landlords are far less likely to consider renting to individuals who reveal they have received in-patient mental health treatment.*

### **Housing**

Landlords are far less likely to consider renting to individuals who reveal they have received in-patient mental health treatment.<sup>56</sup> If individuals end up homeless as a result, they will likely experience multiple stigmas and an increased threat of violence. In one survey, two-thirds of homeless people reported being victimized in the previous year. Seventy-five percent of the crimes were assaults, and 23 percent were rapes.<sup>57</sup> Although less than five percent of the general population experiences a severe mental illness, it is estimated that these individuals comprise between 20 and 40 percent of the homeless population.<sup>58</sup> In addition, neighborhoods often organize to block housing projects that would accommodate individuals with mental health challenges or behavioral difficulties. This type of NIMBYism leads to increased costs and difficulties for creating needed affordable housing and finding locations for services and community programs for individuals living with mental health challenges.

Federal laws prohibit housing discrimination against individuals because of a disability, including a mental illness. The Federal Fair Housing Act prohibits both individual and community discrimination. However, it may be difficult for individuals who have experienced discrimination to establish evidence and find legal representation to seek redress. Funding

to legal aid organizations has dwindled significantly. In addition, many people do not qualify for legal aid, and it can be an arduous process to file a

lawsuit against an employer or landlord.<sup>59</sup>

### **Employment**

The Americans with Disabilities Act outlaws discrimination in employment, public services, transportation, and public accommodations. However, a 1995 survey of U.S. employers showed that half would rarely employ someone with a psychiatric disability, and almost one-quarter would dismiss someone who had not disclosed a mental illness.<sup>60</sup> The loss of work can result in impoverishment, as well as the loss of a source of personal achievement, and participation in mainstream society, which can be a key to recovery.

### **Education Systems**

Educational institutions, including preschool programs, kindergarten through grade 12 (K-12) schools, and higher education campuses, are another system where stigma and discrimination are experienced. Yet schools are in a unique position to encourage help-seeking behavior and dispel misconceptions about social,

# PART 1: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

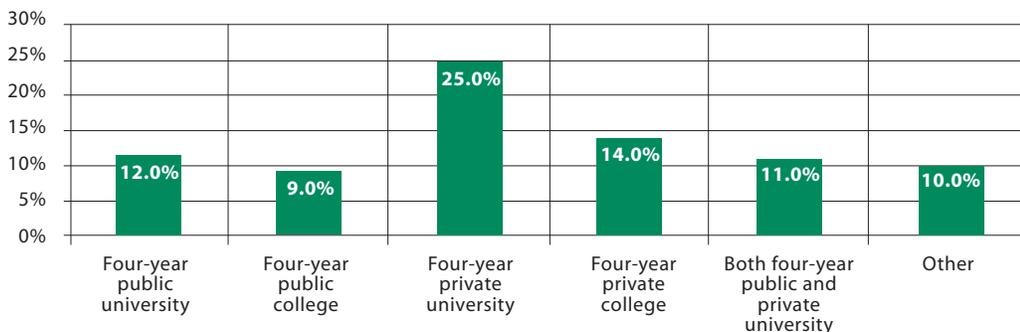
emotional, and behavioral disorders and mental illness. Many schools address stigma and discrimination through a variety of programs and curricula on topics ranging from general mental health education to bullying reduction campaigns. However, despite these efforts, many consumers, family members, and advocates see the educational system as a setting that multiplies the effects of stigma. There is also increasing concern among educators and mental health professionals about the ways in which students respond to and cope with the experience of growing up with a negative label.

Mental health education in schools is becoming increasingly limited due to the focus on academic outcomes and achievement testing. Given the fact that one in five children and adolescents experience the signs and symptoms of a mental health disorder during the course of a year, schools are an ideal setting to address stigma and discrimination.<sup>3</sup> Teachers, counselors, and school staff should have professional development opportunities related to addressing common mental health concerns; promoting healthy social and emotional development; and implementing culturally

competent strategies to address stigma, discrimination, and related topics. Educational leadership is in a unique position to develop healthier, safer, and more inclusive school cultures, such as implementing well-established programs like Building Effective Schools Together (BEST). The BEST program includes positive behavior supports and research-based and research-proven interventions that address the entire school population.<sup>61</sup>

At the university level, constricting budgets and the growing need to accomplish more with fewer resources have led many college counseling centers to develop alternative services. College counseling centers were founded in the 1950s to provide career counseling to veterans and other students. In the 1970s through the early 1980s, these centers expanded their services to include an array of clinical options, such as personal counseling, assessment, diagnosis and treatment; psycho-educational testing; outreach; prevention programs; and campus consultation.<sup>62</sup> While counseling centers offer many assistance programs, today's college counseling center provides individual therapy to, on average, only 12.7 percent of the college population.<sup>63</sup>

**Figure 4. Percentage of Higher Education Students Seeking Counseling by School Status (2009)<sup>64</sup>**



# PART 1: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

For young adults, coming to the counseling center to be treated for a mental health issue can be intimidating. Despite the center's priority on confidentiality, students know that a peer may be sitting across the lobby. Students may even be hesitant to enter the building where the counseling center is located. One student reported to his counselor that he took the elevator up to the fourth floor and then walked down the stairs to the third floor so no other students would see him exit the elevator at the counseling center. Others students reported only using the stairs for this reason.<sup>64</sup>

Student athletes may have particular hesitation to seek services, given the emphasis on strength and the avoidance of any action that could be perceived as weakness. Students who belong to fraternities and sororities may also avoid the counseling center, as these organizations often place a priority on hiding "blemishes" that could impact their reputation. Yet the most serious health issue is that of the college student experiencing suicidal ideation. Suicide is a

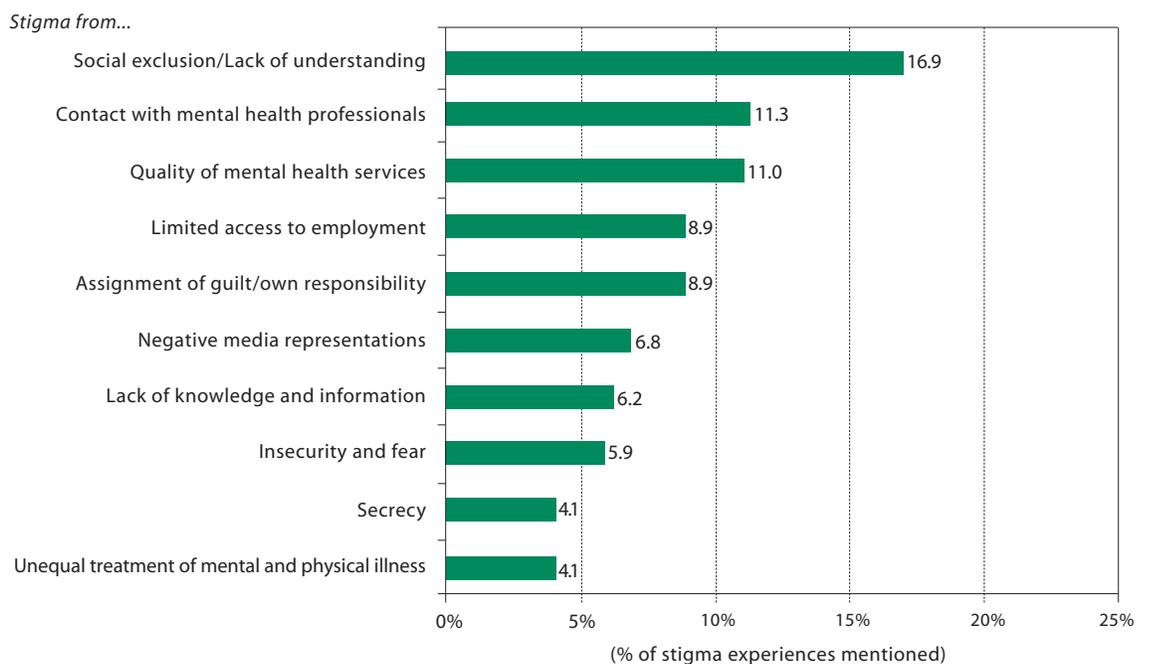
leading cause of death for college students, but over 80 percent of students who have taken their own lives never visited the counseling center. Conversely, those students who do receive counseling are six times less likely to die by suicide.<sup>65</sup>

In fall 2008, the American College Health Association polled over 25,000 students at 40 universities nationwide. In this National College Health Assessment, only 30 percent of college students considered "seeking help from a mental health professional if they were having a personal problem that was really bothering them." Yet, over 50 percent reported to have felt so depressed that it was difficult to function and 20 percent of students reported to have seriously considered suicide.<sup>66</sup>

## Mental Health System

Studies have shown that stigma is even prevalent among the mental health provider community.<sup>66</sup>

**Figure 5. The 10 most frequent stigma experiences of service users and families<sup>67</sup>**



# PART 1: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Institutional stigma and discrimination within the mental health system may result in policies or actions that create inequities in access to, and distribution of, mental health resources for certain population groups. One study of mental health consumers and family members cited that stigma related to mental health care, e.g., contact with mental health professionals and quality of mental health services, accounted for nearly one quarter of their reported stigma experiences (see graph on previous page).<sup>67</sup> A clinician may focus on problems and symptoms while appearing to ignore the strengths and resources of the individual and family, especially in the critical initial contact and diagnosis.

When people encounter stigmatizing attitudes from mental health professionals, they may avoid seeking or continuing treatment. One study of mental health professionals' attitudes toward integrating people with serious and persistent mental illness into the community found that mental health staff at outpatient psychiatric clinics held more exclusionary attitudes than staff in agencies providing residential services or advocating on behalf of people with severe and persistent mental illnesses.<sup>68</sup>

## Medical System

Individuals living with mental health challenges may face resistance when attempting to access basic and appropriate

health care services. Studies suggest that these individuals receive fewer medical services and are less likely to receive the same range of coverage under their insurance benefit plan.<sup>15</sup> One study found that people with a serious mental illness die on average 25 years earlier than the general population.<sup>69</sup>

*One study found that people with a serious mental illness die on average 25 years earlier than the general population.*

Healthcare providers, including physicians, may not recognize the symptoms of a mental illness or be knowledgeable about effective treatment. For example, according to the National

Institute of Mental Health, 20 percent of older adults who died by suicide had visited their primary care physician on the same day, 40 percent within one week, and 70 percent within one month prior to the suicide.<sup>70</sup>

## Criminal Justice System

With the closure of many public mental hospitals throughout the nation, jails and prisons have become the largest mental health facilities in the U.S. for those whose mental health challenges lead them to commit unlawful acts.<sup>13</sup> The criminalization of mental illness often begins when police, rather than mental health professionals, respond to mental health crises. Police and prison workers often do not receive adequate training needed to work effectively with individuals with mental health conditions. In addition, jails are not designed to provide treatment and supportive service and may add to the individual's distress.<sup>71</sup>

# PART 1: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

## The Twin Towers Jails

Since 1955, almost 94 percent of the public psychiatric hospital beds in California have been eliminated.<sup>72</sup> At the same time, county jail systems and emergency rooms have seen large influxes of individuals suffering from mental health conditions. Of the nearly 20,000 inmates in the California county jail system, roughly 60 percent suffer from a mental health challenge. The Los Angeles Police Department reports that at the Twin Towers jails, 1,000 beds are filled nearly every night by patients with psychiatric conditions, more than in any mental institution west of the Mississippi.<sup>73</sup> Similarly, over 60 percent of youth incarcerated in the juvenile justice system have a mental health diagnosis.<sup>74</sup>

People exhibiting signs of serious mental illness are more likely than others to be arrested by the police,<sup>75</sup> and people with mental illness tend to spend more time incarcerated than those without mental illness.<sup>76</sup> Of the 30,000 inmates in California jails and prisons who have a serious mental illness, the majority are nonviolent, low-level offenders who landed in the criminal justice system partly because they did not receive adequate community treatment.<sup>77</sup>

## Media

From the 1950s to the 1990s, the percentage of Americans who viewed individuals with mental health challenges as dangerous nearly doubled.<sup>1</sup> Observers, including the United States Surgeon General, have posited that media portrayals influence these attitudes.<sup>32</sup> Studies have found a clear connection

between negative media portrayals of mental health challenges and public attitudes and stereotypes.<sup>78</sup> Since many people may learn about mental illness from the media and entertainment industries,<sup>59</sup> inaccurate information can inadvertently promote stigma and discrimination.

Despite the widespread view of a connection between violence and individuals experiencing a mental health challenge, the United States Surgeon General's 1999 report on mental health strongly emphasizes there is very little risk of violence or harm to a stranger from casual contact with a person who has mental health challenges.<sup>32</sup> However, the stigmatizing images of the dangerousness of the mentally ill abound in news and entertainment venues. A survey of more than 3,000 newspapers found 39 percent of the stories about mental illness focused on dangerousness and violence.<sup>79</sup> One study of 34 animated feature films produced by The Walt Disney Company, including *Dumbo* (1941), *Beauty and the Beast* (1991), and *The Lion King* (1994), found that 85 percent contained verbal references to mental illness that were mainly used to set apart and degrade the characters.<sup>80</sup>

## Opportunities for the Future

In addressing stigma and discrimination toward people living with mental health challenges, both significant obstacles, as well as significant opportunities, exist. California can learn from various approaches that groups and communities have used to make strides against stigma and discrimination on other fronts, such as racial discrimination, homophobia, and the successful passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act.

# PART 1: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

California also has the opportunity to learn from successful efforts to counter stigma and discrimination associated with mental illness in countries, including New Zealand, Scotland, England, Australia and Canada, as well as from other efforts here in the United States. Additionally, we can learn from the

public health sector's broad-based approaches to changing attitudes and behaviors around other health issues, such as tobacco control, promotion of seat belts, anti-drunk driving, violence prevention, and obesity prevention. In Part 2, these opportunities are discussed in more depth.

## PART 2: STRATEGIES, APPROACHES, AND METHODS FOR REDUCING MENTAL HEALTH STIGMA AND DISCRIMINATION



**E**fforts to reduce mental health stigma and discrimination are a relatively new phenomenon.

Consequently, the body of research and evaluation to date on this emerging area is still limited. As California launches its efforts, what should guide our discussions? What do we know about how to effectively prevent and reduce mental health stigma and discrimination for the long term?

### ***What Can We Learn from Past Stigma and Discrimination Reduction Efforts?***

Anti-stigma leaders drew from the experiences of successful efforts on many different fronts, including disability rights, civil rights, and other anti-discrimination and human rights efforts when they

launched their first campaigns in the 1990s. These campaigns have since been adapted based on their successes and failures.

The first major anti-stigma campaign was launched in 1996 by the World Psychiatric Association, with a pilot program in Canada that worked to increase positive mental health coverage in the media.<sup>81</sup> This *Open the Doors* campaign grew to include efforts in 19 countries and triggered other initiatives across the world.

The bulk of early large-scale campaigns used national mass media advertising to educate the public. In England, the Royal College of Psychiatrists in its five-year campaign urged the public to *Stop! Think! Understand!* In Scotland, a nationally sponsored campaign featured close-up pictures of individuals with mental health challenges and the slogan *see me.... I'm a person not a label*. Early campaigns often also incorporated an effort to advocate

## PART 2: STRATEGIES, APPROACHES, AND METHODS

for more accurate media portrayals of those with mental health challenges.

Over the years, anti-stigma campaigns have discovered that education alone is not enough. Education can produce a better informed public, but it does not significantly reduce discrimination. Many campaigns have become multifaceted by incorporating various approaches, including efforts to change policies and laws. The campaigns often involve individuals with mental health challenges at all program levels, including in positions of leadership and in programs where they can share their personal experiences. Many campaigns have been modeled on the work of Patrick Corrigan at the University of Chicago Center for Psychiatric Rehabilitation and the Chicago Consortium for Stigma Research. Corrigan has argued for approaches that identify both particular discriminatory populations and discriminatory behaviors as the targets for campaigns and protest actions.<sup>82</sup>

Today's campaigns also often aim to influence attitudes and behaviors at multilevels: individual, family, community, system, local, regional, state, and national. In addition, campaigns are working to incorporating more thorough and reliable ways to benchmark and evaluate their efforts.

Because of the intractable nature of attitudes, which are often hidden, and behaviors, which may be undertaken unconsciously, the impact of campaigns can take time. Thus, those individuals planning and executing campaigns must be prepared for a long-term effort. For example, Scotland's "see me" mental health anti-stigma campaign assumes that substantial and ongoing change will require a generation.

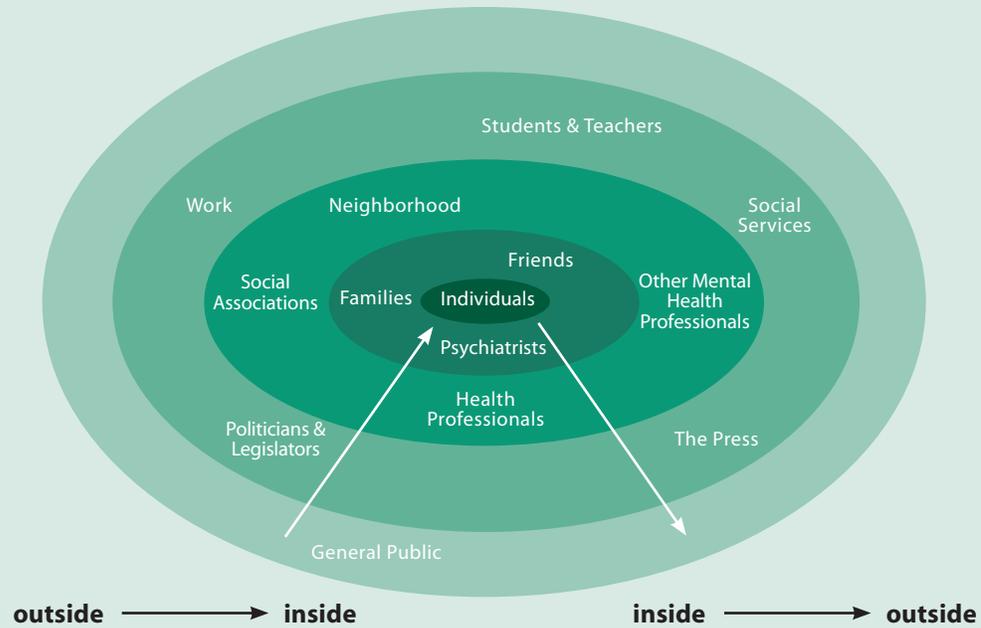
### ***Hallmarks of a Successful Social Marketing Campaign***

Social marketing is similar to traditional marketing, but instead of encouraging the purchase of goods or services, social marketing encourages behavioral change. Social marketing can be an excellent tool for reframing behavior, reducing barriers to change, motivating individuals to explore behavioral alternatives, reaching unserved or underserved populations, and nudging social norms toward positive change. Lessons learned from previous social marketing efforts stress the importance of strategically researching and identifying the intended audiences and the best strategies and methods to effectively reach and influence them.

Based on the review of the literature, a potentially successful social marketing campaign has eight key characteristics. The greater the number of the following characteristics included in an effort, the higher the likelihood of success:

- Carefully planned and thought-out approaches to targeting and influencing audiences, including both the general population and specific groups
- Multifaceted, utilizing the full array of methods to achieve change
- Multilevel, focused concurrently at the individual, family, schools, community, organizational, and system levels, both locally and statewide
- Focused on changing both attitudes and behaviors

**Figure 6. The Social-Ecological Model<sup>86</sup>**



This model is not static or piecemeal. Rather, each layer builds upon other layers, and it both affects and is affected by the other layers as well.

**Individuals (Intrapersonal)** – At the center of the model is the individual. At this fundamental level, the internal determinants of behavior are considered and include knowledge, attitudes, beliefs, and skills. The model recognizes that many external forces influence individual determinants.

**Friends, Families, and Psychiatrists (Interpersonal/Group Factors)** – Whether it is a family or a group of friends, a peer-to-peer or peer-run group, almost everyone belongs to some sort of group. Groups provide social identity and role definition. Interpersonal groups are an important way to encourage more healthful behaviors, giving individuals the knowledge and support they need.

**Social Associations, Neighborhoods, and Health and Other Mental Health Professionals (Institutional/Organizational)**

– Social associations can include places of worship, sports teams, and volunteer groups. Organizations can influence their members’ attitudes and behaviors about people experiencing mental health challenges through policies, procedures, programs, and formal or informal structures.

**Work, Students and Teachers, Social Services, the Media, Policy Makers (Community)** – A community is like a large organization, able to make policy and environmental changes to help influence social norms and standards to reduce stigma and discrimination. Large organizations may include schools and places of employment.

**General Public** – Policies, laws, and general public beliefs and behavior can support healthy actions, anti-discriminatory actions, and stigma reduction.

## PART 2: STRATEGIES, APPROACHES, AND METHODS

- Long-term, as attitudes and behaviors do not change quickly and reinforcement is necessary
- Adequately funded
- Actively involving key stakeholders and program partners both within and outside the mental health community
- Incorporating benchmarks and evaluation and using the results to inform future efforts<sup>83,84,85</sup>

### How the Social-Ecological Model Can Help Frame the Interventions

Given that the evidence to date supports a multilevel, multifaceted approach, the following social-ecological model appears to provide a framework that could be effective in structuring the work ahead. This model and social marketing have both played a critical role in numerous public health efforts promoting the use of seatbelts, tobacco control, suicide prevention, and HIV prevention.

The social-ecological model provides a framework that places a spotlight on the relationship between environmental and behavioral determinants of health. This relationship is reciprocal; the environment affects health-related behavior, and people can, through their actions, affect the environment. This approach assumes overall health is shaped by a web of societal relationships.

The underlying theme of the social-ecological model is that the most effective interventions occur simultaneously at multiple levels. This particular model conceptualizes a comprehensive program addressing five spheres, or levels of influence, that shape the overall health of an individual, community, and society.

### Overview of Primary Methods

Anti-stigma campaigns have used methods, or interventions, for creating change in attitudes and behaviors. These methods can be used alone or in conjunction with one another. A comprehensive campaign will carefully examine the merits of each method and combination of methods. Past and existing stigma and discrimination reduction programs are used as examples of the range of tools available.

The methods most often used are:

- Direct interpersonal contact
- Education
- Advocacy, coalition building, and support

### Direct Interpersonal Contact

Research into direct interpersonal contact has shown that, for it to be effective, the participants must do the following:

- Meet as equals in status
- Have an opportunity to get to know each other
- Share information that challenges negative stereotypes
- Actively cooperate
- Pursue a mutual goal<sup>87,88</sup>

Research shows that generally the most effective way to reduce stigma is through personal contact with someone with a mental illness.<sup>28</sup> Successful anti-stigma campaigns typically include vehicles to promote direct interpersonal contact with individuals living with mental health challenges. Direct interpersonal contact can mean a teaching session, a drama performance, or conversations with people in everyday life.<sup>15,82</sup> Many anti-stigma contact efforts offer presentations in

## PART 2: STRATEGIES, APPROACHES, AND METHODS

which consumers share personal stories. *The Heard*, a speakers bureau organized by the National Mental Health Awareness Campaign, features young people who present their personal stories of recovery from mental illness at schools and other public venues. The speakers deepen public understanding of mental illness recovery, serve as reminders that consumers must be active participants in their own care, and provide hope and empowerment for others who may be experiencing their own mental health issues.

*Some studies suggest the attitude changes prompted by contact may persist over time, although at a reduced level.*

In California, consumer-driven *Stamp Out Stigma* uses an interactive panel of four to six speakers sharing their personal stories. The organization has given more than 1,300 presentations to audiences, including businesspeople, policy makers, educators, doctors, and the general public through television and radio shows. In addition, the organization consults with law enforcement organizations, doctors, dentists, and others.<sup>13,90</sup>

The National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) has also organized a speakers' bureau, called *In Our Own Voice*.<sup>91</sup> The speakers bureau, which features presentations by individuals with mental health challenges, significantly decreased stigma when compared to fact-based education provided by mental health professionals.<sup>92</sup>

In another study, high school students showed less stigmatizing attitudes after receiving one-hour presentations by consumers.<sup>93</sup>

Some studies suggest the attitude changes prompted by contact may persist over time, although at a reduced level.<sup>94,95</sup> However, some researchers, while affirming that contact has tended to produce positive results, question the methodological quality of this work.<sup>96</sup>

Researchers developed and tested a particular mode of interaction among ethnically diverse students, called cooperative learning groups (small groups where students work to accomplish

common goals that benefit them and all of the group members to maximize everyone's learning). A sizable body of evidence demonstrates the effectiveness of cooperative learning groups for increasing attraction between members of different social categories, and the effects of these groups can be extended to include students with disabilities.<sup>97</sup>

Researchers for New Zealand's anti-stigma programs have recommended that an educational program be used to facilitate these contact conditions. Under this model, people who have experienced mental health challenges take on trainer roles; the training is designed so that all the participants pursue mutual goals, actively cooperate, and get to know each other. The information exchange focuses on disproving negative stereotypes. Initiatives in New Zealand and other countries that have taken this approach have reported positive results.

## PART 2: STRATEGIES, APPROACHES, AND METHODS

### Education

Education can be targeted to the general public or a specific audience. It is a key feature of virtually every anti-stigma campaign.

#### Public Education

Public education campaigns have proved effective at influencing attitudes and behavioral change in the public health field, as well as in mental health stigma and discrimination reduction. A public education campaign can increase awareness and understanding as a way to reduce stigmatizing attitudes. Successful campaigns require a coordinated effort between agencies, community organizations, community leaders, advertising agency partners, and the media.<sup>12</sup> Carefully crafted messages can be conveyed through advertisements, television, radio, movies, CD-ROMs, newspapers, magazines, the Internet, brochures, or clothes and accessories. Television ads include the more affordable public service announcements, which unfortunately are often aired during times when few people are watching and do not offer the reach and saturation required to produce effective social behavior change. Paid advertising, which is more effective but more costly, enables the campaign to target specific audiences by airing at specific times.

Research has shown that some education efforts have produced short-term improvement in attitudes.<sup>15</sup> Educational interventions may produce substantial and longer lasting changes in attitudes if they emphasize give-and-take exchanges rather than a strict lecture format.<sup>13</sup> Experience in the health promotion field has shown that multiple exposures (saturation) to educational materials may be required to produce long-term changes in attitudes and behavior.

### Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's Elimination of Barriers Initiative

In January 2003, the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's (SAMHSA) Center for Mental Health Services launched the *Elimination of Barriers Initiative* (EBI). The EBI's purpose was to identify effective approaches for addressing the stigma and discrimination people with mental illness face. The EBI was a three-year demonstration project designed to test approaches to address discrimination and stigma in eight pilot states: California, Florida, Massachusetts, North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Texas, and Wisconsin.

In the case of the EBI, social marketing strategies and tactics encouraged target audiences to adopt favorable attitudes toward and be part of an accepting environment for people with mental illnesses. The three target audiences were: the general public (adults, ages 25 to 54), the business community, and secondary school educators.

The EBI employed three distinct social marketing strategies that researchers found to effectively reduce discrimination and stigma: public education, direct contact with mental health consumers, and rewards for positive portrayals of people with mental health challenges.

Multifaceted and multilevel approaches that analyze the varying environments of the target audiences – family, community, and society – are important.

Some researchers are concerned that particular efforts could backfire and result in greater entrenchment of negative stereotypes if education is not carried out carefully. Attention

to an ill-informed portrayal may make that image, rather than a new, more appropriate and positive image, become even more firmly entrenched in someone's mind.<sup>13</sup>

In the United States, anti-stigma education campaigns have been sponsored by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, (SAMHSA), with its *Campaign for Mental Health*

## New Zealand: Like Minds, Like Mine

New Zealand's national *Like Minds, Like Mine* program has drawn praise for its comprehensive, multilevel, long-term, social marketing-based approach to countering stigma and discrimination. It is widely regarded as one of the most successful mental health anti-discrimination programs.<sup>99</sup> In place since 1997, it is also the longest national program.

In 2006, more than 50 percent of surveyed consumers reported reduced levels of stigma and discrimination from family, mental health services, and the public, and about 50 percent reported a reduction in stigma and discrimination in the employment arena.<sup>100</sup> After 11 years, the percentage of the public viewing those with mental health challenges as more dangerous than others decreased by 14 percent.<sup>101</sup>

The program has used a range of methods, including:

- Nationwide television and radio advertising campaigns
- Public speaking engagements by people with mental health challenges sharing their experiences
- Local programs and activities, such as photography and art exhibitions, public marches or protests, and Maori cultural events

- Media advocacy to disseminate positive personal stories, guidelines for journalists, training for journalism students, and other efforts to encourage nondiscriminatory reporting
- Promotion of discrimination-prevention policies and equal access to housing, education, and employment

The program is a collaborative effort involving a broad spectrum of agencies, such as mental health service providers, consumer-run organizations and networks, and non-governmental organizations.<sup>102</sup> It includes national public relations efforts and regional promotional and training activities. Over time, it has been adapted; it now incorporates an outcomes-based planning framework, and it is working to strengthen the role that people who have experienced mental challenges play in the program's leadership, management, and operation. The program evaluates its efforts through national surveys and focus groups. During its first five years, it was funded at almost \$1.5 million (in U.S. dollars) annually. For comparison purposes, New Zealand's population is about 12 percent the size of California's population.

## PART 2: STRATEGIES, APPROACHES, AND METHODS

*Recovery*. A nonprofit group, *No Kidding, Me Too!* uses its celebrity advisory board (members include Ed Bagley, Jr.; Jeff Bridges; Matt Dillon; and Edie Falco) to promote messages of empowerment and acceptance.

Other types of public education include community information sessions, workplace materials, lectures, classes, and workshops.

### Targeted Education

Research has shown the benefits of tailoring content and

materials to specific groups to increase a message's effectiveness.<sup>103</sup>

Targeted campaigns can focus on particular age groups, such as children, adolescents, transition-age

youth, or older adults. Targeted campaigns for children are considered particularly important to influence stigmatizing attitudes and discriminatory behaviors before these attitudes develop or become firmly established. Such campaigns include BEST (see page 23).

Some studies have shown that children's attitudes toward mental illness become firmly established between grades six and eight. At the same time, the antecedents of stigma and discrimination manifest at very early ages in the form of peer exclusion and social isolation. This manifestation suggests that early education and prevention efforts could help avoid the development of stigmatizing attitudes.<sup>104</sup> Not only do schools have the

possibility of reaching many children, but children are also more likely to accept lessons related to understanding others at a younger age.<sup>105</sup> Some researchers have urged the development and implementation of school-based, anti-stigma educational programs.<sup>13</sup>

The *National Mental Health Awareness Campaign* was a nationwide, nonpartisan public education campaign launched as part of the 1999 White House Conference on Mental Health, organized by Tipper Gore, wife of then-

Vice President Al Gore. The campaign aired public service announcements geared toward adolescents on MTV and other popular teen outlets. The result was overwhelming as more than 12 million hits to its associated

website, [www.whatadifference.samhsa.gov](http://www.whatadifference.samhsa.gov), were reported in the program's first five months alone, indicating that more widespread discussion and research on mental health was occurring.<sup>82</sup>

Campaigns may also target racial, ethnic, or immigrant groups, or other types of communities, such as faith-based organizations. For example, SAMHSA has developed anti-stigma educational materials in Spanish.<sup>83</sup> From 2004-2008, England conducted its anti-stigma campaign, *Shift*, specifically targeted to African Americans and other ethnic communities.<sup>106</sup> Mental Health Ministries in San Diego produces VHS and DVD media aimed at decreasing mental health-related stigma in faith-based communities.<sup>107</sup>

*Early education and prevention efforts could help avoid the development of stigmatizing attitudes.*

### United Kingdom: Changing Minds

*Changing Minds*, an anti-stigma program conducted by the Royal College of Psychiatrists from 1998 to 2003, included multiple levels of public education to reduce stigma, with a special focus on family education. Target populations included doctors, children and young people, employers, the media, and the general public. A substantial toolkit of materials was developed. These tools, which are generally still available, include articles, books, booklets, fact sheets, DVDs, CD-ROMs for teachers, slogan-bearing bookmarks, and comic books. The comic books, for four to seven-year-olds, discuss what it is like to be different. In “Peaches,” children learn that Peaches is different through no fault of her own. Other puppies tease her, but she learns with the support of her family and friends how she can use her bark to help others. In “Quackeline,” children learn about the duck who wanted to be a swan, but discovered how important it is to be itself.

Some campaigns target friends, parents, family members, and others who are in contact with individuals experiencing mental health challenges. SAMHSA’s *What a Difference* media campaign targeted transition-age youth, encouraging them to maintain their social contacts with friends who have mental health challenges.<sup>108</sup> Other campaigns target groups who may have particular power to stigmatize or discriminate, such as employers, school administrators, landlords, medical or mental health professionals, members of

the media, and decision-makers. The People with Disabilities Foundation in San Francisco has produced an educational video aimed at employers. The *Open the Doors* program in Boulder County, Colorado, has launched efforts to educate and change attitudes within the criminal justice system. The program offers training for police, probation officers, correctional officers, attorneys, and judges.<sup>109</sup>

Trainings, educational curricula, and school programs are other examples of targeted educational efforts. The California Association of Social Rehabilitation Agencies has developed an anti-stigma curriculum for social work education programs. In Maryland, the Anti-Stigma Project’s *On Our Own* targets stigma within mental health services through workshops designed to help break down barriers between consumers, family members, providers, and administrators.<sup>110</sup> Using consumer trainers, the workshops have enabled participants on all sides to see issues from different viewpoints and have reduced polarizing interactions between consumers and staff.<sup>111</sup> Similarly, NAMI sponsors a 10-week *Provider Education Course* taught by consumers and family members.

### Advocacy, Coalition Building, and Support

Researchers with Scotland’s national health department have argued that any effort to tackle discrimination, stigma, and social exclusion needs to acknowledge the substantial power differences that exist between people with mental health challenges and those who discriminate against them. Reducing discrimination requires reducing these imbalances in social, economic, and political power.<sup>112</sup>

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Anti-stigma advocacy has largely focused on influencing the media and working in the policy and legal arenas. Advocacy may also take the form of community-wide efforts aimed at institutions or community norms, such as boycotts, rallies, and write-in campaigns.

### Media Advocacy

Media advocacy programs have been a popular and effective means of influencing and altering mental health-related content in movies, television programming, and print media. Media advocacy is a particularly important area for action, as sensationalist news coverage and film portrayals are believed to be one of the main factors contributing to distorted public attitudes about individuals with mental health challenges.<sup>13,113</sup>

The largest such effort in the United States is NAMI's *StigmaBusters*. *StigmaBusters* and its network of nearly 20,000 advocates monitor and protest inaccurate or stigmatizing representations of mental illness on TV, film, print, or other media. *StigmaBusters* played a role in 2000 in removing from the air the ABC television show *Wonderland*, which focused on a psychiatric hospital. *StigmaBusters* directed its advocates to complain not only to producers and ABC TV management, but also to the chief executive officers of sponsors.<sup>82,114</sup> Other U.S. organizations engaged in stigma busting include the New York-based National Stigma Clearinghouse. Similar media-focus efforts have been used in England, Scotland, and Australia.

Award programs are another means of influencing media. Several U.S. anti-stigma efforts have included award programs. The

*Voice Awards*, sponsored by SAMHSA and a number of partners, is an annual ceremony held in Los Angeles to recognize entertainment writers and producers for their accurate, dignified, and respectful portrayals of people with mental health challenges.<sup>115</sup> The DiDi Hirsch Community Mental Health Center holds an annual *Erasing the Stigma Leadership Award* to honor those in Hollywood working to reduce stigma.<sup>116</sup> Other media-related efforts include:

- The *Rosalynn Carter Fellowships for Mental Health Journalism*, a program at the Carter Center founded by former U.S. President Jimmy Carter and former first lady Rosalynn Carter<sup>117</sup>
- The *Mental Health Media Partnership*, a program of the National Mental Health Awareness Campaign, which serves as an information bridge between mental health experts and the entertainment industry<sup>118</sup>

### Legal Advocacy

The United States has various powerful anti-discrimination laws, including the Fair Housing Act and the Americans with Disabilities Act, considered by some people to be the most comprehensive disability discrimination law in the world covering psychiatric disability.<sup>119</sup> Still, anti-discrimination efforts continue to focus on further improving public policy and regulations to protect against discrimination, or to enforce or seek redress through the courts under existing legislation. Additional systemic methods under this category include investigations, assessments, or reviews designed to determine if existing laws, policies, or procedures are complied with and are being enforced. Some observers have argued that the enforcement of laws and advancement of policies are essential components to successfully counter stigma and discrimination.

*“Initiatives to reduce discrimination should make use of the iron fist of law within the velvet glove of persuasion.”*

– Liz Sayce, former Director of Policy and Communications of England’s Disability Rights Commission

A number of international anti-stigma efforts have incorporated new laws or policy changes. For example, the recently launched *Time to Change* anti-stigma campaign in England includes a component called Time to Challenge, which filed disability discrimination lawsuits on publicly important issues.<sup>120</sup> Organizations such as the Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law and the Disability Rights Education and Defense Fund provide legal advocacy services in the interests of those with mental health challenges.

### **Coalition Building**

An important component of anti-stigma and discrimination campaigns is the coalition building of different individuals, organizations, and sectors to work together toward a common goal. Several campaigns have been launched by a group of organizations, rather than one entity. For example, in Scotland, *see me....* was funded by the federal government, but run by an alliance of five Scottish mental health organizations. England’s recently launched *Time to Change* effort is funded through a lottery fund and led by three non-governmental organizations: Mental Health Media, Mind, and Rethink.

### **Support**

Support and guidance activities can take the form of support groups, counseling efforts, technical assistance, and empowerment strategies. NAMI has a *Connection Recovery*

### **Mental Health in Primary Care**

Community-based primary care is often the first location for detecting and treating mental health problems. It is also often the first point of contact for identifying and treating individuals who otherwise might face stigma, or cultural or other barriers to accessing traditional mental health services. Health centers can play a unique role in providing access to mental health services for individuals who may never seek out traditional mental health services. Whether or not people are physically ill and even how ill they are is not the primary determinant of whether they decide to visit a physician. Studies have suggested that only 12 to 25 percent of health care use can be accounted for by disability or morbidity alone. Nearly 70 percent of all health care visits have a psychosocial basis. Of the ten most common complaints encountered in primary care, less than 10 percent had a diagnosable physical etiology. The most frequently occurring psychosocial reasons for medical utilization are behavioral disorders, alcohol or drug addiction, deficient social support, lack of coping skills, and a stressful home or work environment.<sup>121</sup>

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*Support Group* program, which offers consumer peer-support groups where adults with mental health challenges can exchange coping strategies and successful stories of recovery.<sup>122</sup>

The SAMHSA ADS Center, otherwise known as the “Resource Center to Promote Acceptance, Dignity and Social Inclusion Associated with Mental Health,” offers a broad range of support services, including a website, resources, training, and technical assistance to help create social inclusion initiatives, as well as tools to help those with mental health challenges gain information about legal rights. The National Mental Health Consumers’ Self-Help Clearinghouse in Philadelphia connects people to self-help

### Alameda County Network of Mental Health Clients Programs

The Alameda County Network of Mental Health Clients provides the *Berkeley Drop-In Center*, which offers peer-led direct services (support groups, case advocacy, generalized advocacy, information and referral, instructional groups, free food, phone, books, magazines, transportation assistance, and clothing) and recreational activities (socialization and art activities).

In another program, *Reaching Across*, people with emotional problems and illnesses help each other and themselves by offering mutual support and by listening to speakers. Everyone in the program is encouraged to share responsibility for the program and take an active part in it.

and advocacy resources and offers training, curricula, and technical assistance.

Many forms of empowerment are closely aligned with the methods described above under advocacy, including involvement in legal and policy action, and protests. Other empowerment strategies can include economic development projects offering job training and employment.

Preliminary studies from two federally funded research centers and many independent researchers have found that at the individual level, the benefits of participation in peer-led, self-help include increased independence and self-reliance; improved self-esteem; enhanced coping skills and feelings of personal empowerment; and increased knowledge of services, rights, housing, employment, and other issues of special concern to those experiencing a mental health challenge.

One example of an empowerment approach is the *Mad Pride* parade, sponsored by MindFreedom International in locations around the world, from Eugene, Oregon, to Cape Town, South Africa. These parades celebrate the culture and human rights of mental health consumers.<sup>124</sup> Activists and artists using the term “mad” in these endeavors see this approach as an act of reclaiming power over historically negative stereotypes.<sup>125</sup> Arts-based activities are also common and include *Nothing to Hide: Mental Illness in the Family*. This award-winning touring photo exhibit, developed by the nonprofit Family Diversity Project, tells poignant stories of courageous individuals and their families whose lives are affected by mental illness.<sup>126,127</sup>

## Research

There is a dearth of research and evaluation findings to clearly establish what methods, or combination of methods, will best aid in reducing stigma and discrimination toward those with mental health challenges.<sup>112,128</sup>

Many trials have been uncontrolled, lacked the proper length of time to study results or have been small in size. Self-reported measures have often been used, which can be inconsistent in reporting standards. Because of these information gaps about the effectiveness of various anti-stigma and anti-discrimination approaches, carefully designed evaluations should be built into anti-stigma programs so learning can be shared.<sup>13</sup> Evaluations that use the community participatory methodology (where the community is active in both conducting and evaluating studies within their community) are strongly encouraged.

Documents, such as *The Well-Being Project: Mental Health Clients Speak for Themselves*, and *Normal People Don't Want to Know Us: First-Hand Experiences and Perspectives on Stigma and Discrimination*, are examples of the mental health community's early efforts to bring attention to the issues of mental health stigma and discrimination.<sup>129,130</sup> However, mental health anti-stigma and discrimination programs have not gotten the kind of research and evaluation that more established, long-term programs, such as California's Tobacco Control Program, have received.

## Nhan Hoa Clinic

The Nhan Hoa Clinic in Orange County, California, has been working in collaboration with Korean Community Services and the Orange County Asian Islander Community Alliance to establish the Asian Pacific Islander Outreach and Engagement Program. This collaborative partnership provides a full scope of mental health services to the Asian Pacific Islander communities. Together, the clinic has language capacities of Korean, Tagalog, Chinese, Samoan, Vietnamese, and other Asian Pacific Islander languages. The Orange County Health Care Agency Mental Health Services Act, Proposition 63, funds these programs.<sup>123</sup>

## Creating the Future in California

The following section of the Plan focuses on what Californians can do to relegate mental health stigma and discrimination to the past. The section is a call to action for communities, local and state government, the private sector, businesses, and nonprofit organizations, as well as Californians from all walks of life. The strategies and steps discussed in Part 3 will require creativity, thoughtful planning, and determination and coordination at both the local and state levels to make a difference.

## PART 3: BLUEPRINT FOR REDUCING MENTAL HEALTH STIGMA AND DISCRIMINATION



**T**he *California Strategic Plan on Reducing Mental Health Stigma and Discrimination* serves as a blueprint for a broad spectrum of individuals, organizations, and systems to take action. The Mental Health Oversight and Accountability Commission recommends that this Plan be reviewed every three years. The Plan is organized by three levels of focus for reducing mental health stigma and discrimination: strategic directions, recommended actions, and next steps.

The Plan offers a comprehensive range of strategies, starting from changing attitudes, beliefs, and practices; to promoting awareness and accountability; to enforcing the laws; and to increasing knowledge through research and evaluation. The programs and services generated from this Plan must go beyond traditional approaches. A community-tailored approach is essential and will require community-wide strategies and responsive

organizational and environmental policies and practices. State and local partners spanning multiple disciplines and settings must work together to create the comprehensive multilevel approach needed to make a difference in California.

The four strategic directions are broad levels of focus that serve as the central aim for more specific recommended actions. These 26 recommended actions are not an exhaustive list, but they have emerged as priorities at this point in time to reduce mental health stigma and discrimination and its impact on individuals, families, and communities throughout California. These recommendations are grounded in the data and evidence offered in the two preceding chapters and were refined through the course of many rich discussions of the California Mental Health Stigma and Discrimination Reduction Advisory Committee and through public workshops.

The next steps, identified as bullets, are specific ways that these recommended actions can be implemented “on the ground,” whether at the state, regional, or local level. These strategic directions, recommended actions, and next steps lay a foundation for a comprehensive approach to reducing mental health stigma and discrimination. All aspects of this work must incorporate the six core principles developed by the Advisory Committee:

**Core Principle 1:** Implement culturally and linguistically competent strategies and programs that reduce disparities and reflect the values and beliefs of diverse populations.

**Core Principle 2:** Employ a life-span approach to effectively meet the needs of different age groups.

**Core Principle 3:** Involve a broad spectrum of the public, including mental health consumers, family members, friends, caregivers, mental health and allied professionals, advocates, and agencies that interact with children, youth, adults, and older adults.

**Core Principle 4:** Address all types of stigma and anti-discrimination laws.

**Core Principle 5:** Build upon promising practices and proven models.

**Core Principle 6:** Recognize that individuals experiencing mental health challenges are resilient and have the capacity for recovery, and that the best results in treatment for those experiencing mental health challenges come from voluntary programs that offer choice and options.

## Example:

The following example illustrates how the recommendations are organized into strategic directions, recommended actions, and next steps.

**Strategic Direction 1: Creating a supportive environment for all consumers and those at risk for mental health challenges, family members, and the community at large by establishing social norms that recognize mental health is integral to everyone’s well-being.**

## Recommended Action:

**1.5 Recognize peer-run and peer-led programs as an important means for reducing stigma.**

## Next Step:

- Enhance the skills of peers to be more effective trainers of mental health staff to better address client and family members’ culture in their recovery and wellness services and other relevant topics.

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**Strategic Direction 1: *Creating a supportive environment for all consumers and those at risk for mental health challenges, family members, and the community at large by establishing social norms that recognize mental health is integral to everyone's well-being.***

**1.1 Create widespread understanding and recognition within the public and across all systems that people at different points in their lives experience different degrees of mental health from wellness to crisis; and persons living with mental health challenges have resilience and the capacity for recovery.**

- Form a local coalition of diverse representatives, including those with mental health challenges, to launch a community action plan to educate the public on mental health challenges and wellness and recovery models.
- Develop messages and relevant materials for the public that explain mental health challenges and promote social inclusion.
- Change consumer information, current medical curricula, and the practice of mental health diagnoses and treatment to reflect and reinforce recovery, resilience, and wellness.
- Assess existing print and electronic media on mental health challenges and emotional disturbances to reflect recovery, resilience, and wellness.
- Simplify and promote available, reliable Web resources that promote non-stigmatizing mental health information.
- Rely on mental health consumers and family members to raise awareness of the importance of mental health.
- Identify how everyday language reinforces stigma and discrimination toward those living with mental health challenges and substitute those

words with non-stigmatizing and non-discriminatory language.

- Confront stigmatizing messages from individuals, groups, organizations, and the media.

**1.2 Prevent the development of mental health stigma, stereotyping, and discrimination.**

- Develop and launch a community-wide effort to promote children's healthy social and emotional development.
- Utilize existing children and youth organizations to assess and enhance educational programs for parents, early childhood educators, and caregivers on children's social and emotional development.

**1.3 Create opportunities and forums for strengthening relationships and understanding between consumers, family members, and the larger community.**

- Utilize established community networks to sponsor dialogues among consumers, family members, and the larger public about mental health issues.
- Increase direct contact and dialogues between consumers, family members, and representatives of systems, institutions, and organizations that affect the lives of those living with mental health challenges.
- Create forums with specific organizations to create change, such as mental health providers, educational system personnel, medical professionals, the media, employers, and landlords.

- Create roundtables in local communities to focus efforts on specific populations, such as older adults, foster children, or veterans, or a specific topic, such as housing, employers, or law enforcement officials.

#### **1.4 Reduce self-stigma of individuals living with mental health challenges and stigma by association for their family members.**

- Assess, develop when necessary, and widely disseminate educational and training materials on how to combat mental health self-stigma.
- Adapt educational and training materials to local community needs.
- Encourage mental health providers to assess their procedures to identify and eliminate any contributory actions to consumer self-stigma.
- Support education and training for veterans and their families for their effective and healthy reintegration from active duty to the community.

#### **1.5 Recognize peer-run and peer-led programs as an important means for reducing stigma.**

- Assess, develop, and disseminate information on peer-run and peer-led programs and social support models.
- Work with local and statewide organizations to establish peer-to-peer support as a vital component of mental health treatment.
- Develop local speakers bureaus, presentations, and forums that feature peers who are successfully dealing with mental health challenges.
- Promote education and skill-based training for consumer and family

empowerment to address such topics as cultural competence, communication, and advocacy.

- Utilize technology and other advancements to support groups or individuals who are geographically or emotionally isolated.
- Enhance the skills of peers to be more effective trainers of mental health staff to better address client and family members' culture in their recovery and wellness services and other relevant topics.
- Create training and advancement opportunities to increase an individual's ability to implement peer-run and peer-led programs.
- Develop a peer-to-peer network of support for veterans in higher education and within communities.

#### **1.6 Address the multiple stigmas of persons living with mental health challenges who are also faced with discrimination based on their race, ethnicity, age, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, physical disability, or other societal biases.**

- Disseminate successful models that have been identified by different cultural communities.
- Educate substance abuse providers and mental health providers to reduce the effects of stigma for individuals encountering co-occurring disorders.
- Work with racial and ethnic community groups to ensure that models and programs are culturally and linguistically competent and eliminate stigmatizing barriers.

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### 1.7 Provide increased support for those closely involved with the lives of individuals facing mental health challenges.

- Apply innovative information technologies so that parents and caregivers may easily obtain accurate information, guidance, and referrals to seek needed services.
- Identify non-traditional community locations (churches, youth programs, and community centers) to distribute information on available mental health resources.

### 1.8 Reduce the effects of stigma with a strength-based approach to assessment, diagnosis, treatment planning, and interventions.

- Train providers to assess and develop individualized mental health plans that

are strength-based.

- Educate families, youth, peers, and adults in the concepts of resiliency, recovery, hope, and healing.
- Provide training on the strength-based approach to child protective service systems, juvenile and adult justice systems, law enforcement, and education.
- Promote opportunities for self-expression through the arts and other outlets.
- Address the stigma that comes from residing in a mental health facility by providing increased support, education, training, and guidance to facility residents and staff, county workers, family members, caregivers, and others closely involved in the lives of individuals in the facilities.

## **Strategic Direction 2: Promoting awareness, accountability, and changes in values, practices, policies, and procedures across and within systems and organizations that encourage the respect and rights of people identified with mental health challenges.**

### 2.1 Initiate systematic reviews to identify and address stigmatizing and discriminatory language, behaviors, practices, and policies.

- Explore, understand, and address how policies and procedures impact individuals living with mental health challenges.
- Conduct a review of one or more of the following state or local systems and programs to identify behaviors, policies, and practices for areas of improvement: pre-K-12 education, community college and university,

medical system, mental health system, media, and law enforcement. The local community would disseminate its findings.

- Support ethnic diversity and cultural competency training among mental health providers and advocacy groups.
- Train mental health staff on stigma and discrimination reduction.
- Support training for mental health staff that educates them on the unique cultural aspects of working with veterans.

## **2.2 Establish developmentally appropriate prevention, recovery, and wellness programs.**

- Work with the county mental health departments and other mental health providers to ensure that programs and facilities are provided and tailored to individuals of different ages.

## **2.3 Ensure that mental health services are offered in non-traditional, non-stigmatizing community and school sites.**

- Develop and disseminate effective treatment practices for those with multiple stigmas so the practices are widely available through the medical and mental health systems.
- Address the public resource distribution of mental health services to best meet the service needs of populations experiencing multiple stigmas.
- Co-locate primary care and mental health services and staff to better meet the needs of people with mental health challenges through an integrated approach.
- Utilize innovative technologies, including mass media and the Internet, to reach individuals and communities.
- Increase the use of non-traditional cultural approaches.

## **2.4 Create a more holistic and integrated approach to physical health and mental wellness by promoting integrative delivery models of mental health, primary health care, and social services; achieving parity between medical and mental health services in terms of coverage and financing; and utilizing spirituality and faith-based practices as tools for wellness and recovery.**

- Sponsor local and statewide programs to support medical practitioners to screen individuals for mental health risk factors and conditions as part of routine care and provide appropriate referrals.
- Assist medical care practitioners in detecting and appropriately treating common problems, such as depression, anxiety, alcohol and substance abuse, and childhood social, emotional, and developmental problems.
- Screen for and address both mental and medical needs of individuals entering a mental health facility.
- Convene an expert panel to discuss financial strategies for reducing stigma associated with the mental health and medical health care systems. Topics of discussion could include the Mental Health Parity Act; same-day visit reimbursement for community health centers and federally qualified health centers; the medical necessity criteria under Managed Care Mental Health for County Mental Health; preauthorization requirements for mental health services; and MediCal reimbursement for medical practitioners who provide mental health screenings.
- Train providers on the value of spirituality in the wellness and recovery process and the contributions faith-based and other non-traditional providers make.
- Establish and/or enhance regional, inter-faith-based networks throughout California to serve as resources to practitioners and consumers on faith-based approaches and methodologies.
- Create a category on existing or future resource sites to address faith-based

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best practices and models covering prevention through recovery services.

- Utilize the multi-faith-based network to provide insight on different beliefs and values that can inform treatment approaches and methodologies.

### **2.5 Promote the dignity and safety of mental health consumers and their family members by training and educating law enforcement, first responders, other medical personnel, and the community at large to reduce stigmatizing attitudes and discriminating behavior. Educate the public about community resources available to assist with mental health-related crises; utilize informed consent as a means to ensure voluntary choice; prepare and equip law enforcement to better respond to the needs of individuals in mental health-related crisis; and eliminate a perceived need for the use of force and forced compliancy through these and other systematic alternatives referred to earlier in this Plan.**

- Support the expansion of local response programs to better meet the needs of individuals with mental health challenges, (crisis residential programs, advanced directives, and integrated community services teams).
- Support and provide crisis intervention training that informs first responders about alternative sites and transport methods for individuals experiencing a mental health crisis to minimize the use of 5150s and criminal incarceration.
- Develop and widely disseminate information on de-escalation approaches and techniques (such as peer involvement) for emergency room

personnel, law enforcement (including municipal, county, state, and federal), homeless shelter staff, and mental health providers.

- Provide increased support, education, training, and guidance to in-patient care staff to eliminate the use of seclusion and physical or pharmaceutical restraint.
- Provide anti-stigma education and resources to individuals within a rural community (clergy, pharmacists, postal carriers, fire-fighters and police, school teachers, and those who deliver meals-on-wheels) who routinely come into contact with a wide range of people,
- Enhance the partnerships between consumers, family members, and law enforcement.
- Establish mandatory continuing education in mental health issues for criminal justice professions that may have close contact with children and adults with mental health challenges.

### **2.6 Educate employers on the importance of mental health wellness for all employees.**

- Develop curriculum, training, websites, and guidebooks to educate employers on mental health development and literacy, the value of social inclusion, wellness, recovery and resilience, mental health community resources, and other topics relating to stigma and discrimination reduction. Involve mental health consumers in developing and delivering of trainings and other educational outreach.
- Develop an educational campaign targeted to employers that emphasizes the financial benefits of a mentally and physically healthy workforce.

- Provide a comprehensive list of community resources and referrals that employers can make available to employees under emotional stress.
- Educate employers on their responsibilities to create work environments free of stigma and discrimination.

## **2.7 Expand opportunities for employment, professional development, upward mobility, retention, and success of mental health consumers in public, nonprofit, and private sector workplaces by enforcing current laws and challenging hiring biases.**

- Identify and disseminate strategies to promote the job-seeking skills and employment of individuals with mental health challenges.
- Create local opportunities for networking and relationship building among consumers, family members, regional business leaders, and other employers.
- Implement successful strategies to increase the employment, retention, and advancement of consumers and their family members within all levels of public and community mental health service delivery.
- Encourage employers to select employee health plans that offer mental health coverage.
- Encourage large employers to offer an employee assistance and counseling program as part of their benefit package.
- Review existing employment practices to identify and address any gaps that may exist.

## **2.8 Eliminate discriminatory barriers to better meet the housing needs of mental health consumers by: educating the general public, landlords, and local officials on the rights and housing needs of mental health consumers and their families/caretakers; ensuring that all private and subsidized housing meets the nondiscrimination requirements of the Fair Housing Act and that their admissions procedures and management practices ensure all applicants and tenants have equal opportunities to benefit from the housing; encouraging supportive housing and other housing for individuals with disabilities to be well integrated throughout the community, accommodating of all levels of care; promoting the provision of housing first as one means to eliminating discriminatory barriers; and promoting the accessibility of services in housing.**

- Foster opportunities for consumers to meet, educate, interact with, and develop relationships with housing developers, neighborhood groups, planning commissions, and elected officials.
- Promote affordable housing for people experiencing mental health challenges.
- Promote the accessibility of supportive housing services for people with mental health challenges, (case management, health, mental health, vocational, and transportation).
- Create reintegration models for the discharge of people who are at risk of becoming homeless when leaving institutional settings, such as hospitals, juvenile halls/jails/prisons, foster care, and detoxification facilities.

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- Identify and encourage the enforcement of current housing laws.
- Convene local workgroups that reflect the community's diversity and include housing developers, housing agencies, community organizations, mental health providers, consumers, and family members to develop strategies and recommendations to improve housing options for individuals living with mental health challenges.

### **2.9 Engage and educate the commercial, ethnic, public/community, and interactive media, as well as the entertainment industry, on standards and guidelines to promote balanced and informed portrayals of people living with mental health challenges; and ways to serve as a resource for communicating accurate and non-stigmatizing information to the public on mental health issues and community resources.**

- Create an anti-stigma campaign that highlights that everyone at different points in their lives may experience some degree of mental health impact from wellness to crisis.
- Develop tools to track and acknowledge print and electronic media sources for positive and balanced portrayals of individuals living with mental health challenges.
- Develop strategies to reward the balanced portrayals.
- Develop and disseminate reporting guidelines and materials designed for the media that provide background materials on a range of mental health issues, including community resources and referral information

useful to the public.

- Collaborate with higher education news outlets to provide information, resources, and referrals regarding mental health concerns.
- Work with the local and/or statewide media to develop mental health programming as part of "May is Mental Health Month."
- Train consumers and family members to serve as spokespeople for mental health issues.

### **2.10 Promote and enhance initiatives, programs, and curricula to change school cultures and increase social inclusion and social acceptance.**

- Integrate mental health topics within the required health education and wellness programs and other relevant school-based prevention programs, such as violence prevention and anti-bullying.
- Encourage local mental health units to work with educational institutions to develop prevention and early intervention techniques as alternatives to fail-first initiatives for children and youth experiencing mental health challenges.
- Include the reduction of stigma and discrimination against people with mental health challenges in annual comprehensive school safety plans to provide a high level of school safety.
- Encourage school attendance review boards to include a mental health representative when meeting with students who have exhausted their school's resources.
- Develop support groups and systems for children and siblings of consumers experiencing mental health challenges.

- Work with students, parents, teachers, administrators, school board members, and school superintendents to implement school programs and policies that promote social inclusion.
- Establish training programs for teachers (preschool to higher education) to work more effectively with student mental health issues.
- Support special accommodations for individuals experiencing a mental health challenge who might not fall under educational guidelines for learning disabilities.
- Determine successful approaches and methods for educating students entering health professions about stigma and discrimination, such as sensitivity training, and stigma and discrimination awareness.

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### **Strategic Directions 3: Upholding and advancing federal and state laws to identify and eliminate discriminatory policies and practices.**

#### **3.1 Increase awareness and understanding of existing laws and regulations that protect individuals living with mental health challenges and their family members against discrimination.**

- Develop and widely disseminate user-friendly fact sheets with contact information for education and training purposes on applicable state and federal laws, regulations for school personnel and students, the housing industry, and public and private employers, as well as the medical and mental health systems.
- Review federal and state regulations that support funding mental health services in non-traditional settings to reduce stigma for consistency.

#### **3.2 Promote the compliance and enforcement of current anti-discrimination laws and regulations.**

- Establish periodic meetings with government and nonprofit civil rights enforcement agencies to discuss the adoption of compliance and enforcement campaigns.
- Develop local task forces or build upon existing structures, when available, including city and county legal counsels and diverse community members, to develop strategies for maximizing compliance with and enforcement of laws, regulations, and ordinances that protect individuals living with mental health challenges in areas including employment and public accommodation.
- Create opportunities for local task forces to communicate and coordinate strategies for promoting the compliance and enforcement of current anti-discrimination laws and regulations.
- Train staff at institutions of higher education, prisons, and public and private health facilities to ensure the understanding and proper implementation of existing privacy protections and confidentiality provisions.
- Work with state agencies with appropriate jurisdictions to create joint statements offering legal opinions on areas of discrimination encountered by persons with mental health challenges in housing, employment, and other public accommodations.

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- Create and disseminate anti-stigma education materials for treatment teams and discharge planning staff at mental health facilities and staff at public guardians' offices.

### **3.3 Work to enhance and/or amend current statutes and regulations to further protect individuals and their family members from discrimination.**

- Develop a statewide committee with legal experts and diverse community members; build upon existing structures, when available, to evaluate existing laws and regulations for any embedded discriminatory provisions and gaps; and develop corrective strategies to address these problems.
- Disseminate widely the findings regarding legal gaps in current laws and regulations as well as the embedded discriminatory language in these laws and regulations, together with the recommended corrective strategies.

### **3.4 Develop policies and mechanisms within the criminal justice system to more appropriately meet the needs of individuals with mental health challenges, including those located in in-patient psychiatric facilities.**

- Promote mental health courts and other alternatives to incarceration.
- Disseminate any court policies and protocols developed by the Judicial Council of California and the Administrative Office of the Courts designed to improve outcomes for and reduce recidivism of persons with mental health challenges in the criminal justice system.
- Develop training standards on anti-discrimination laws and regulations.
- Train law enforcement and criminal justice officials to recognize and prosecute mental health discrimination.

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### **Strategic Direction 4: *Increasing knowledge of effective and promising programs and practices that reduce stigma and discrimination using methods that include community-led approaches.***

#### **4.1 Develop and implement a plan to address the information gaps on how to reduce stigma and discrimination to build effective and promising anti-stigma and anti-discrimination programs.**

- Compile and report data on the community's strengths and how to best use this information in program design, development, and assessment.
- Develop incentives to build partnerships between academic research and community-based research.
- Provide assistance to counties in developing anti-stigma and anti-discrimination programs and the tools necessary to identify gaps and work collaboratively with the academic community.
- Utilize multi-disciplinary research techniques from the anthropological, medical, and recovery and wellness fields to guide research on the various forms of mental health stigma and discrimination.

- Identify research techniques on the evaluation of anti-stigma programs for local use.

#### **4.2 Increase the skills and abilities of community participants to evaluate programs.**

- Identify funding streams for communities to enhance their research and evaluation skills.
- Promote the community participatory methodology.

#### **4.3 Ensure that research and evaluation projects adapt and respond to community needs.**

- Design research projects with input from the community to address data elements, methodology, sample size, over-sampling of diverse populations, and other aspects as needed.

- Ensure that communities are actively involved in research and that findings are shared with the community for input.
- Utilize and disseminate existing research on social behavior campaigns targeted to ethnic groups and communities.
- Develop cross-cultural research and evaluation resources and tools.

#### **4.4 Disseminate the lessons learned, promising practices, and other outcome findings.**

- Ensure that findings, research and assessment tools, and market research are easily accessible and widely disseminated as they become available, and encourage community researchers and community leaders to contribute information.

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Copies of the *California Strategic Plan on Reducing Mental Health Stigma and Discrimination* and an Executive Summary of the Plan are available for download from the California Department of Mental Health website at [www.dmh.ca.gov](http://www.dmh.ca.gov). Hard copies can be requested by contacting the State Level Programs Branch via postal mail, e-mail, or telephone.

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