

Milwaukee Co. Exec. Abele: Kicks off Mental Health Month, encourages conversations about mental illness

Posted on Monday, May 1, 2017

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MILWAUKEE – Milwaukee County Executive Chris Abele today declared May as Mental Health Awareness Month and May 4th as Children’s Mental Health Awareness Day. The County’s Behavioral Health Division (BHD) will launch a month-long campaign designed to foster conversations about mental health care, reducing stigma, and breaking down barriers for individuals to seek support.

“Mental health affects everyone; approximately 1 in 5 Americans experience a mental health issue – that’s about 180,000 people in Milwaukee County who are struggling with mental illness,” said Milwaukee County Executive Chris Abele. “We want these individuals to know they are not alone – we can help and recovery is possible.”

Mental Health Awareness Month will kick off on May 4th, Children’s Mental Health Awareness Day, with a community conversation about mental health services facilitated by the Zeidler Center for Public Discussion. Milwaukee residents are encouraged to attend to help bring awareness to the prevalence of mental health issues and gather more information for the Behavioral Health Division’s 2018 budget.

Throughout the month, the Behavioral Health Division and more than 25 city health

departments, nonprofit organizations, coalitions, schools, and other partners will highlight different mental health topics including dedicated specialists like behavioral health nurses, children's mental health resources, and prevention activities. BHD will also share stories, information and resources on social media and encourage people to have conversations by tweeting about the mental illness using #mhmconvo.

Behavioral Health Division's partners, providers, partners and more can participate in the following ways:

- Join the conversation online – help us normalize the conversation around mental health by sharing your stories about mental health, prevention, recovery and more by using #myMHconvo.
- Join the conversation in person – participate in the Mental Health Services Community Conversation on Thursday, May 4 at the Hillside Terrace Resource Center from 5:45 – 7:30 p.m. (RSVP at www.zeidlercenter.org/mentalhealth).
- Start the conversation about mental health – Download the mental health toolkit at by clicking [here](#). For conversation starters, fact sheets, flyers and more visit: Milwaukee.gov/myMHconvo.
- Visit us on the web for a full list of community wide activities throughout the month of May, including a gun lock distribution during prevention week (May 14 – 20).
- Download our video about the three pillars of healthy development that shape a child's mental health and share with other parents.
- Donate a book – Behavioral Health Division will be accepting new and slightly used children's books to share with parents throughout the month of May (9455 Watertown Plank Rd. Wauwatosa, WI 53226).

“Everyone can suffer from behavioral health problems at any stage of life, from childhood and adolescence through adulthood,” said Michael Lappen, Administrator at the Behavioral Health Division. “But people with behavioral health problems can get better and many recover completely. We know that engaging people in conversations about mental illness and in their active recovery is extremely important. That's why we are proud to be the first stop for information and help on behavioral health, bringing people with mental illness together with resources and providers who can help.”

Individuals seeking behavioral health resources should call the Behavioral Health

Division at [414-257-7665](tel:414-257-7665) to be connected to resources. If an individual is experiencing a mental health crisis (non-medical), that person should call our 24/7 crisis line at [414-257-7222](tel:414-257-7222).

For more information on Mental Health Awareness Month visit [Milwaukee.gov/myMHconvo](https://milwaukee.gov/myMHconvo). To schedule an interview with a BHD expert, contact Katy Glodosky at [920-627-2619](tel:920-627-2619) or katy.glodosky@milwaukeecountywi.gov.

Behavioral Health Division employees available interviews:

- Mike Lappen, Administrator of the Behavioral Health Division
- Nzinga Khalid, prevention coordinator, Behavioral Health Division
- Dr. Steven Dykstra, Clinical Psychologist, Behavioral Health Division
- Others available upon request / to accommodate your angle

About the Milwaukee County Behavioral Health Division

The Behavioral Health Division provides care and treatment to adults, children, and adolescents with mental illness, substance use disorders, and intellectual disabilities through both County-operated programs and contracts with community agencies. Services include intensive short-term treatment through our crisis services and inpatient services, as well as a full array of supportive community services for persons with serious mental illness and substance use disorders.