



May 12, 2021

May is National Mental Health Awareness Month

This past year has been such a difficult year for many of us. Loved ones have gotten sick and even died of COVID-19. We weren't able to get together with family and friends due to physical and social distancing. There was the stress with the national presidential election. More people suffered and even died from heroin and fentanyl overdoses. And, present and past traumas in our community were activated with the murder of George Floyd and so many others, the resulting protest marches, and the attempts at the difficult conversations that are so needed regarding issues of race.

All of this upset and trauma affects our mental health. That is why we need to use this month of May to emphasize stronger mental health for everyone. Each year millions of Americans face the reality of living with a mental illness. During May, the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) joins the national movement to raise awareness about mental health. Each year NAMI fights stigma, provides support, educates the public and advocates for policies that support people with mental illness and their families.

Some facts from NAMI:

- 20.6% of U.S. adults (51.5 million people) experienced mental illness in 2019, but only 43.8% of them received treatment.
- 5.2% of U.S. adults (13.1 million people) experienced serious mental illness in 2019, but only 65.5% of them received treatment

For 2021's Mental Health Awareness Month, NAMI will continue to amplify the message of "You Are Not Alone." We can realize our shared vision of a nation where anyone affected by mental illness can get the appropriate support and quality of care to live healthy, fulfilling lives — a nation where no one feels alone in their struggle.

On Thursday, May 20, 2021, MTV will hold a Mental Health Day of Action to help inspire people to talk about their lived experience, destigmatize mental health, and galvanize a movement to drive significant cultural, political and policy changes. Each person and company have their own ability to drive change and support this day of action in ways that work best for them, including: community, influencer or employee engagement; amplification; digital events; free support; and product updates. More information is at www.nami.org/MentalHealthMonth.

Locally, www.namiillinois.org has great resources and contacts. And, if you or someone you love has thoughts of hurting themselves or thoughts of suicide, they should go to an emergency room or call the Suicide Prevention Lifeline at (800) 273-TALK or (800) SUICIDE. Let's strive for improved mental health for all!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'LSK', written in a cursive style.

La Shawn K. Ford
State Representative-Eighth District