

HUNGER HEALTH EQUITY



Spotlight on Mental Health



Feeding America is collaborating with Mental Health America (MHA) to raise awareness about mental health conditions and their connection to food and health equity. Together, we can help people facing hunger get the extra help they need to maintain mental wellness.

Mental health is an essential component of an individual's overall health and well-being. It influences how we think, feel and act, and includes our emotional, psychological and social well-being. Mental illnesses are brain-based conditions that affect thinking, emotions, and behaviors. Facing a mental health challenge during your life is common and treatable. In any given year, nearly 1 in 5 adults in the United States will have a diagnosable mental health condition.¹

These factors increase risks for mental health conditions:

- Poor sleep
- Physical inactivity
- Chronic medical conditions
- Family history of mental health
- Increased stress

Diet and nutrition are critical in maintaining good health and well-being. However, social, structural and systemic inequities have contributed to higher rates of hunger and the prevalence of mental health conditions for Black, Latino and Native American individuals.

To overcome these inequities, new opportunities must emerge to ensure that everyone has access to culturally appropriate healthy food, unbiased health care and essential resources that improve overall health and well-being.

Feeding America's, A Closer Look series provides ways you can take action in your community and includes "real-life" stories of progress.

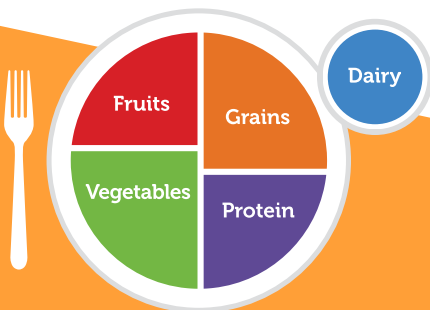
FAST STATS Mental Health

Mental illness affects 18% of adults in the U.S.² However, it disproportionately impacts historically marginalized BIPOC³ communities due to structural barriers such as reduced access to quality care, treatment and healthy foods resulting in a higher prevalence of mental illness in these communities.

Native Americans and Indigenous individuals report experiencing serious psychological distress 2.5 times more than the general population over a month's time.⁴

In 2018, 58% of Black and 56% of Latino young adults ages 18-25 with serious mental illness did not receive treatment.⁵

In 2018, 50% of Black and African American adults ages 26-49 and 40% of Latino adults ages 26-49 with serious mental illness did not receive treatment.⁵



MyPlate.gov

- FRUITS AND VEGETABLES: 1/2 PLATE
- WHOLE GRAINS: 1/4 PLATE
- FISH AND OTHER LEAN PROTEINS: 1/4 PLATE
- LOW FAT OR FAT-FREE DAIRY: 3 CUPS

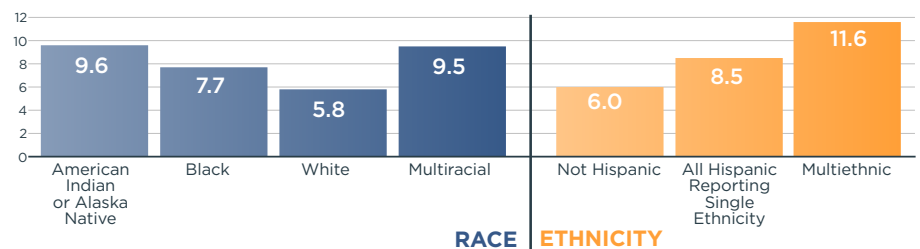
Diet and nutrition

A healthy, [well-balanced](#) diet including leafy green vegetables, fruits, legumes, fish, whole grains, nuts, avocados and olive oil supports a healthy brain and helps prevent and manage mental health conditions.

Community stakeholders, including food banks, food pantries, non-profits, public health and health care organizations, can support people in trying to eat healthier.

That's why Feeding America has partnered with [Healthy Eating Research](#) to develop strategies and evidence-based nutrition guidelines to improve the quality of foods distributed through the charitable food sector.

Average days of activities missed due to poor physical and mental health, by race/ethnicity⁶



- Food low in saturated and trans fats
- Low sodium options
- Low sugar options



Stories from the Field

The Association for Mental Health and Wellness (MHAW), an affiliate of MHA, recognizes the complex links between economic inequality, food insecurity and mental and physical health. Through a lens of wellness, MHAW looks beyond the symptoms of illness and instead focuses on how to build optimal health through a multi-level, prevention-oriented approach. As a recovery center, shared meals are a way to build connections and teamwork, and several years ago, they worked with a nutritionist to look at the food they served. Their approach was to promote healthy choices by making them readily available. They found when given the option, many of the Recovery Center's members opted for fresh fruits and vegetables. This promoted healthy choices at the center and revealed that many members were facing food scarcity at home. Thus, their food pantries were born. Since 2009, they have operated food pantries at three of their service centers in efforts to continue to serve and support the overall health of their communities.

TACKLING FOOD INSECURITY TOGETHER



"We offer staple pantry items that can easily create a nutritious meal, with a focus on fresh fruits and vegetables. Through donations and in season, through our very own organic Healing Garden, we provide freshly grown vegetables, fruits, and herbs for our pantry."

Colleen Merlo,
CEO at MHAW

"It is not just about the quantity of food but the quality. What you eat affects your mood."

Ruth McDade,
Director of Development and Healing Garden Volunteer

Take Action! Address mental health and hunger.



CONVENE food/hospitality, education, social service, and other community partners to identify and develop solutions to hunger and health barriers within the community.



PRIORITIZE increasing access to affordable food, health care and medication; addressing the social determinants of health; eliminating health disparities; amplifying community voice.



BUILD TRUST through positive interactions and communication with the community and engage in developing strategies to address the unique and complex needs of people facing hunger, eliminating bias, recognizing we are all in this together.



DESIGN culturally appropriate resources; and make accessible in local clinics, grocery stores, food banks and pantries, community centers, schools and places of worship.



ADVOCATE for policy, systems and environmental change approaches that support increased nutritious food access, improved health and well-being for community members in greatest need.

¹2017 National Survey on Drug Use and Health: Detailed Tables. (2018).

²Quick Facts and Statistics About Mental Health | Mental Health America. (n.d.). Retrieved from www.mhanational.org/mentalhealthfacts

³BIPOC stands for Black, Indigenous, and other peoples of color

⁴Centers for Disease Control. (2018). Health United States, 2017. Table 46. www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/abus/abus17.pdf

⁵Ng, J., Zhang, Q., Scholle, S. H., & Guerino, P. (2017). Racial and Ethnic Disparities in Mental Health Among Diverse Groups of Medicare Advantage Beneficiaries. 28.

⁶Chart 1. CMS 2017. Average days of activities missed due to poor physical and mental health, by race/ethnicity. www.cms.gov/About-CMS/Agency-Information/OMH/Downloads/Data-Highlight-Vol11-Dec-2017.pdf



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