

MENTAL HEALTH

ACHIEVING AND MAINTAINING THE
BEST POSSIBLE MENTAL HEALTH



AGING TEXAS WELL MEANS THAT TEXANS PREPARE FOR AGING IN ALL ASPECTS OF LIFE AND THAT STATE AND LOCAL SOCIAL INFRASTRUCTURE FACILITATES AGING WELL THROUGHOUT THE LIFESPAN.

An estimated 20 percent of older adults experience mental disorders that are not a normal part of aging.

TRENDS

- Mental stress and mental illness take a significant toll on the health, costs of care, and daily functioning of older adults.
- The highest rates of mental disorders (50 percent or more) are found among older adults in institutional settings.
- Social stigmas often cause health care professionals, as well as patients and families, to inaccurately attribute abnormal behavior to the aging process instead of recognizing symptoms of disease.
- The consequences of under-diagnosis and lack of appropriate treatment can be severe, especially in cases of depression. Over three-fourths of suicides occur among older adults who have diagnosable depression.
- People 65 and older are less likely than younger populations to use available community mental health services.
- Neither standard health insurance policies nor federally-funded programs such as Medicare adequately cover mental health screening, diagnosis, community services, and medication.
- Insurers often reimburse outpatient services by a psychiatric specialty provider at 50 percent, much less than the 80 percent reimbursement for non-psychiatric services.

Suicide rates of those 65 and older are higher than any other age group.

POLICIES, PROGRAMS & SERVICES

- The Texas Department of Mental Health and Mental Retardation offers a wide variety of services to Texans through 39 Local Mental Health Authorities.
- The President's New Freedom Commission on Mental Health was established to ensure that no one with a mental illness goes without diagnosis and treatment.
- The Suicide Prevention Planning Committee has created a suicide-prevention plan intended as a resource for communities and agencies.
- The Texas Mental Health and Aging Coalition provides technical assistance to help cities and communities with local mental health and aging coalition building.

GET INVOLVED!

- Learn to recognize the signs and symptoms of mental illness and how they differ from "normal aging".
- Reduce the social stigmas associated with mental illness.
- Promote prevention of mental illness and suicide by creating awareness of services and assistance.

FOR MORE INFORMATION ON MENTAL HEALTH

Contact your local **area agency on aging** at: **800.252.9240** for Aging Texas Well resources and services in your community. Or, visit TDoA at **www.tdoa.state.tx.us** for this and other Aging Texas Well publications.