

EACH MIND MATTERS

California's Mental Health Movement

Fact Sheet Mental Health and Diverse Communities

Culture plays a key role in how individuals perceive and experience mental illness, including whether they choose to seek help, who they turn to for help, what coping styles and support system they have, what treatments might work and much more. To effectively serve America's diverse populations, mental health systems need to understand, respect and value cultural differences and the key role they play in the delivery of mental health services. Each Mind Matters: California's Mental Health Movement is made up of millions of individuals and thousands of organizations working to advance mental health. We are committed to supportive communities that encourage anyone and everyone to get help they need when it's needed.

African-American

- African Americans tend to rely on family, religious and social communities for emotional support rather than turning to health care professionals, even though this may at times be necessary. ([NAMI African American Community Mental Health fact Sheet](#))
- Poverty level affects mental health status. African Americans living below the poverty level, as compared to those over twice the poverty level, are 3 times more likely to report psychological distress. ([U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Office of Minority Health Fact Sheet](#))
- Community education about available resources is needed to reduce the impact of stigma in the local African American community. ([California Reducing Disparities Project Pg. 50](#))
- Overall sensitivity to African American cultural differences, such as differences in medication metabolization rates, unique views of mental illness and propensity towards experiencing certain mental illnesses, can improve African Americans' treatment experiences and increase utilization of mental health care services. ([NAMI African American Community Mental Health fact Sheet.](#))

Latino

- While other major mental health disorders, including schizophrenia and bipolar disorder, exist for Latinos, depression continues to be the biggest concern and a leading cause of disabilities among major ethnic and racial groups in the United States especially Latino youth. ([The Treatment of Depression with Co-Morbid Alcohol and/or Drug Disorders](#))



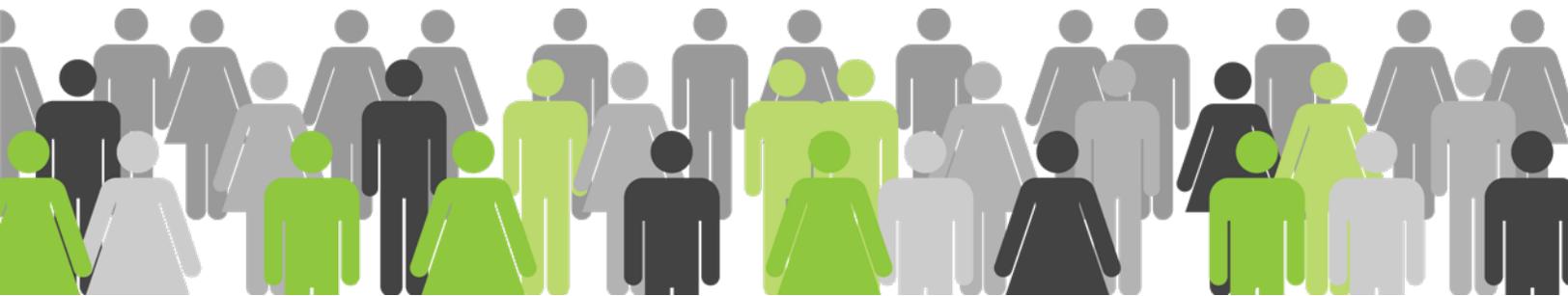
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- Latinos are twice as likely to seek treatment for mental disorders in other settings, such as general health care or the clergy, than in mental health specialty settings. ([NAMI Latino Community Mental Health Fact Sheet](#))
- Latino youth face numerous stressors that may increase the risk of mental health problems ([Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#))
- Hispanics or Latinos may have more positive attitude toward mental health treatment seeking than non-Hispanic whites, suggesting that treatment barriers come about not because of negative attitudes, but because of other structural barriers to care, including language and socioeconomic factors. ([MHA Latino/Hispanic Communities and Mental Health Fact Sheet](#))

American Indian and Alaska Native

- Traditional American Indian and Alaska Native healing systems “focus on balancing mind, body, and spirit within the community context.” Many American Indian groups have long practiced a holistic approach to healing involving a sense of connectedness with place and land, and contrary to the Western approach, generally don't try to isolate one part of the person and heal it, but rather look at the whole person. ([Arch Gen Psychiatry](#))
- An historical distrust of the outside population exists among many American Indian communities. Individuals tend to have negative opinions of non-Indian health service providers, and traditional healing is used by a majority of Native Americans. ([NAMI American Indian and Alaska Native Communities Mental Health Fact Sheet](#))
- Key barriers to mental health treatment for Native American, as for most people, include economic barriers (cost, lack of insurance), lack of awareness about mental health issues and services, stigma associated with mental illness. ([American Psychiatric Association](#))
- Grassroots organizations such as InterTribal Voices of Children and Families create a network to connect Native families across tribes to influence the improvement of mental health services. ([NAMI American Indian and Alaska Native Communities Mental Health Fact Sheet](#))



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Asian American Pacific Islander

- Due to cultural perceptions, Asian Americans may feel shame or embarrassment in experiencing a mental illness, and prefer not to seek care, for fear of shaming their family. In many Asian cultures, expression of one's feelings is an admission of weakness. ([NAMI Asian American Community Mental Health Fact Sheet](#))
- Asian Americans may have more reluctance towards seeking help due to reasons such as stigma, language barrier, lack of access to care, and lack of culturally competent services. ([California Reducing Disparities Project Asian Pacific Islander Populations Report](#))
- Many Hmong elders experience deep social isolation as they have little contact with family, friends, and other Hmong people and have difficulties adjusting to new family roles in the US. These new roles create discord in marital relationships and intergenerational conflict between parents and children. Hmong youth often experience frustration, stress, and depression as they feel caught in the middle of two often conflicting worlds. ([UC Davis Center for Reducing Health Disparities Study](#))

