Mental Health Awareness Month
By Anita Fonner(she/her), Senior Implementation Coordinator and DEI Champion
Middletown Campus

Mental Health Awareness Month can be traced as far back to the early 20th century and its founder Clifford Whittingham Beers, who founded the American mental hygiene movement.

The United States began recognizing Mental Health Awareness Month in May of each year in 1949 through the Mental Health America (MHA) organization, then known as the National Association for Mental Health.

The purpose of Mental Health Awareness Month is to raise awareness and educate the public about mental illnesses, such as depression, schizophrenia and bipolar disorder and the realities of living with these conditions, and strategies for attaining mental health and wellness. Mental Health Awareness Month also aims to draw attention to suicide, which can be triggered by some mental illnesses. Additionally, Mental Health Awareness Month seeks to reduce the stigma that surrounds mental illnesses.

Click here to learn more about the history of Mental Health America.

As a society, we tend to place more focus and emphases on our physical health over our mental health. But they are **equally important**. It's critical that everyone has a solid foundation of knowledge about mental health.

Did you know?

- There's no single cause for mental health conditions. A variety of factors contribute to mental illnesses, such as genetics and family history, life experiences, biological factors and chemical imbalances in the brain and traumatic life events.

- In 2019, just prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, 19.86% of adults experienced a mental illness, equivalent to nearly 50 million Americans.

- Suicidal ideation continues to increase among adults in the U.S. 4.58% of adults report having serious thoughts of suicide, an increase of 664,000 people from last year's dataset.

- A growing percentage of youth in the U.S. live with major depression. 15.08% of youth experienced a major depressive episode in the past year, a 1.24% increase from last year's dataset.

- Over 2.5 million youth in the U.S. have severe depression, and multiracial youth are at greatest risk. 10.6% of youth in the U.S. have severe major depression (depression that severely affects functioning).

- Over half of adults with a mental illness do not receive treatment, totaling over 27 million adults in the U.S. who are going untreated.

- The percentage of adults with a mental illness who report unmet need for treatment has increased every year since 2011. In 2019, 24.7% of adults with a mental illness report an unmet need for treatment.

- Over 60% of youth with major depression do not receive any mental health treatment.

- Nationally, fewer than 1 in 3 youth with severe depression receive consistent mental health care.

- Both adults and youth in the U.S. continue to lack adequate insurance coverage. 11.1% of Americans with a mental illness are uninsured.

- Rates of substance use are increasing for youth and adults, even prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. 7.74% of U.S. adults and 4.08% of youth had a substance use disorder in the past year.

- In the U.S., the average amount of time between the onset of symptoms of a mental health condition or challenge and a diagnosis is 11 years.

Everyone deserves access to the support they need, and when they need it. Starting on July 16, 2022, anyone facing a mental health crisis can call **988** and get connected to the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline (also called the Lifeline). The line will be staffed with trained crisis counselors who know what callers are going through and know what local resources might make a difference. Unlike 911, counselors will be at the other end of the Lifeline when you dial 988. They are trained to understand exactly how you're feeling and to pair you with resources that are specifically tailored to helping you meet the moment you're in. 988 will be staffed 24/7 and is free and confidential.

Note: 988 will not be available to everyone until July 16, 2022. In the meantime, if you or someone you know is in crisis, please continue to contact the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-8255 or the Crisis Text Line by texting MHA to 741741.

Life can be challenging, but every day shouldn't feel hard or out of your control. The delays in treatment for mental health conditions are longer than for many other health conditions. Getting screened can increase the chances of getting treatment. One of the quickest and easiest ways to determine whether you are experiencing symptoms of a mental health condition is to take a free, anonymous, and scientifically validated mental health screening here.

Your screening results can be used to start a conversation with your primary care provider or a trusted friend or family member, and you can begin to plan a course of action for addressing your mental health. You also don't need to be at a crisis point to benefit from additional support. Our Vizo Financial Employee Assistance Program (EAP) offers a variety of support services.

> When facing a mental health concern or living with a mental health condition, it's common to feel like no one understands what you're going through.

Check out this video about the stigma surrounding mental health and know that you aren't alone! Help is available and recovery is possible.