Stop the Stigma

Presented by ACMH's Youth Advisory Committee
Introductions

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Goals of the Presentation

- Learn about the ACMH Youth Advisory Committee and the importance of statewide youth voice
- Introduction to Stop the Stigma - a youth led prevention and mental health awareness campaign
- Hear young peoples’ perspective on mental health awareness and suicide prevention
- Participate in a group discussion about today’s topics and next steps for this movement
Who is the YAC?

- Open to Youth in Michigan ages 15-20 who have lived experience with mental health or behavioral challenge (not limited to any particular system).
- Must have desire to advocate for positive systems change.
- Provides the opportunity for youth to have a voice in decision making that affects them.
- Empowers and supports all Michigan Youth to create positive changes in policies.
- An opportunity to advise legislators, mental health administrators and community members about important issues that matter to youth.
- Helps youth build leadership skills and form valuable partnerships.
History and Background on the YAC and Stop the Stigma

• Started in 2016 – YAC used funds donated to ACMH to create a suicide advocacy and awareness toolkit in memorial of Michigan youth that completed suicide

• The current cohort of YAC members have made updates to the Stop the Stigma project by using our own lived experiences as a guide

• Our goal is to empower adults with knowledge about mental health issues based on our own experiences and provide encouragement to support youth that may be struggling
Statistics

- There is a suicide attempt every 23 seconds in the United States, and a completed suicide every 11 minutes.
- Michigan has 15 suicides for every 100,000 people, compared with the U.S. annual rate of 14.5.
- Suicide is the third leading cause of death among people ages 15–24, and the second leading cause of death in college students ages 20–24.
- 4 out of every 5 young people that consider or attempt suicide exhibit clear warning signs.

Statistics, Continued

- Nationally, fewer than 1 in 3 youth with severe depression receive consistent mental health care.
- The rise in mental health disorders among teens has shown a direct correlation in the increase in teen suicide.
- Michigan adolescents and teens are committing suicide at nearly double the rate of just over a decade ago.

[https://mhanational.org/issues/state-mental-health-america](https://mhanational.org/issues/state-mental-health-america)
Knowing the Signs

• In C.S. Mott Children’s Hospital National Poll on Children’s Health at the University of Michigan, 9-in-10 parents said they were “very confident” or “somewhat confident” they would recognize depression in their middle- or high school-aged child.

• Even so, roughly two-thirds of the parents admit it’s difficult for them to differentiate between normal mood swings and signs of depression or that their child is good at hiding feelings.

Knowing the Signs

“Most parents don’t know the signs. If they did, they wouldn’t know what to say. Honestly, most parents just hope and pray it goes away,”

- Kevin Fischer, executive director of Michigan’s chapter of the National Alliance on Mental Illness

Warning Signs

Signs of mental health concerns can look different for each individual youth. Some signs may be easier to recognize than others.

The following are some of the signs that a youth or young adult is struggling with mental health challenges.
Warning Signs

- Separating themselves from family and friends
- Change in their personality
- Fidgeting
- Worry/anxiety
- Marked fall in school performance
- Changes in sleeping
- Changes in attitude/eating habits
- Concentration
- Lack of interest in activities
- Risky behavior/activities
Warning Signs

Please visit the ACMH website for a more comprehensive list of potential warning signs:

https://www.acmh-mi.org/get-information/childrens-mental-health-101/possible-red-flags/
What Can Adults Do To Support?

“The first thing you must do is take notice of youth’s symptoms. This includes paying attention to changes in mood, behavior, and emotions.”

• Ask what you can do to help instead of asking if they are okay
• Supporting and staying with the youth
• Listening
• Not lecturing
• Being careful what you say/validating
• Consider treatment options
What Not to Do

• Ignoring signs, symptoms, or changes in behavior
• “Get it together”
• Commenting on it but not offering support
• Dismissive comments like: “Toughen up – don’t cry”, “it will be fine,” or “you’re too young…”
• Comparing situations “someone has it worse than you”
• Making fun of them for coping
Tips for Seeking Mental Health Treatment

“The stigma of mental illness may make parents hesitant to seek help or delay seeking care for their adolescent as they may think the symptoms will go away on their own, but it’s important to take the next step if needed.”

- Mott Poll co-director and Mott pediatrician Gary L. Freed, M.D., M.P.H.
Tips for Seeking Mental Health Treatment

• Your child’s pediatrician or family doctor could be a good place to share concerns. If your child does not have a pediatrician or family physician, you can also contact your local Community Mental Health, your child’s school or the clinic you take your child to for health care check-ups.

• The best treatment choice will vary from each youth. Even those with the same diagnosis will have different symptoms, needs, and objectives for their treatment outcomes.

• Support older youth and young adults to advocate for themselves in their treatment – they are the experts on themselves. If something is not working for them, they have the right to say so.
Discussion Panel
Food for Thought

What is one thing you can take back to your community to make a difference?
Video

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xSnGDFzagBg
Contact

For more information about the ACMH Youth Advisory Committee or Stop the Stigma, please visit acmh-mi.org/YAC or contact Sara Reynolds at SReynolds@acmh-mi.org