

What You Need to Know...



Mental Health America of Wisconsin Frequently Asked Questions

What does Mental Health America do?

Mental Health America of Wisconsin (MHA) promotes the rights and well being of people with mental illness. After 80 years, MHA's mission remains dedicated to promoting mental health, preventing mental disorders, and achieving victory over mental illness through advocacy, education, information and service. Our vision is *Leading the Way for Wisconsin's Mental Health*. Essentially, we are an agency that focuses on the prevention of mental disorders by providing information about mental illness to individuals, professional organizations and the community.

Are you part of the County Mental Health Complex?

No. The County Mental Health Complex (Milwaukee County Behavioral Health Center) provides direct services to patients with a mental illness. We do not. We are a private, non-profit (501)c(3) organization affiliated with the National Mental Health Association that provides information, support, advocacy, education and service related to mental health.

Who does the Mental Health America of Wisconsin serve?

MHA serves mental health consumers, individuals, schools, workplaces, senior centers, support groups, survivors of suicide, community organizations in Milwaukee County, as well as surrounding communities and the state of Wisconsin, by promoting the rights and well being of people with mental disorders. MHA is strongly committed to ensuring that quality service reaches minority, low income, women, children and elderly communities.

The people we serve range from those who are mentally healthy, such as those attending workplace presentations and training, to those who are struggling to recover from a serious mental disorder, such as parents in the *Invisible Children's Program* (For a description of the *Invisible Children's Program*, see below). We serve a broad range of socioeconomic backgrounds and cultures, family types and age groups.

Does Mental Health America provide direct counseling?

No. We do not provide counseling or direct services. However, those families who are referred and placed in MHA's Invisible Children's Program are assigned a Family Advocate who works with them on developing life skills and working with the entire family over an extended period of time. The goal is to keep the family together.

Can you recommend a counselor, therapist or psychiatrist?

No, we can't recommend or endorse a specific therapist, counselor or psychiatrist. However, we can give you information about certain clinics, hospitals or county facilities that offer mental health services specific to your needs. We also have an online Mental Health Provider Directory where you can search for area therapists using a number of parameters, including location, type of therapist, specialists, insurance accepted, whether they work on a sliding fee scale and much more. To view our Mental Health Provider Directory, go to www.mhawisconsin.org.

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Does Mental Health America provide any programs or support groups for people with mental illness?

Yes. The Invisible Children's Program offers groups that target parents with chronic mental illness and teaches them life skills that help them raise healthy children. The goal is to keep parents and their children together through support and advocacy.

In addition, MHA's *Survivors Helping Survivors* support groups are for people who have suffered the loss of a loved one to suicide. The groups are led by mental health professionals who volunteer their services.

For a full listing of more than 100 area support groups including anger management, parenting, depression, bipolar disorder, anxiety and survivors of suicide groups, visit our web site at www.mhawisconsin.org and click on Support Groups Directory.

How does Mental Health America advocate for people with mental illness?

One way we support people with mental illness is through legislative advocacy, which keeps people informed about proposals in Congress and the Wisconsin Legislature and ensures that decision-makers understand the importance of addressing mental health issues. MHA serves on several committees that allow us to join our voice with those of other advocates: the Governor's Council on Mental Health, Wisconsin United for Mental Health, the Survival Coalition of Wisconsin Disability Organizations and the MHA Council of Wisconsin. We are also a member of *the Milwaukee Mental Health Task Force* which is committed to being a leader in identifying issues faced by all people affected by mental illness, facilitating improvements in mental health services, giving consumers and families a strong voice, reducing stigma and implementing recovery principles.

MHA has also been working to create statewide systems change to promote the early identification and treatment of mental health disorders. Through a State grant for *Prevention/Early Intervention in Mental Health* MHA has promoted the integration of mental health screening and intervention into primary and acute care medical settings. Through symposia, communications directly to physicians and consultation to health care organizations we have demonstrated practical ways for the health care system to better address the mental health needs of the individuals they are already serving. Through the State grant as well as a federal Garrett Smith Youth Suicide Prevention grant, MHA has nurtured the development of suicide prevention coalitions throughout Wisconsin and provided leadership in creating enhanced public awareness about this issue.

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How does the Mental Health America get information to people?

We take mental health information to schools, workplaces, senior centers, support groups and community organizations. We also reach people through our website, brochures, videos, television and other printed material.

Our community outreach program offers workshops, consultation services and training services for audiences of all ages at local and statewide church groups, schools, professional organizations and public employers. Topics may focus on depression, stress management, self-esteem, suicide prevention, dealing with anger and recognizing signs and symptoms of mental illness.

Over the last several years, one of our primary ways to reach people is through technology. Our web site receives more than

Does Mental Health America provide any information to businesses?

Yes. We provide business-focused presentations on topics related to mental health and the workplace such as stress, depression and work/life balance. All of these issues can cause problems for employers, employees and their families that include a decrease in productivity, low morale and an increase in health care costs. The goal is to maximize health and well being in the workplace to enhance performance.

Who funds Mental Health America?

MHA is funded through a variety of sources. MHA is a United Way of Greater Milwaukee Area, and receives much of its funding through that organization. In addition, we receive several government grants including the Milwaukee County Behavioral Health Division, the National Institute of Mental Health, the Wisconsin Department of Health Services/Division of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services, and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services/Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, we receive grants from various local foundations and individual donors, both of which continue to support MHA programs and services and make what we do possible, however big or small their contributions may be.

For a full list of supporters from 2009, please view our 2009 Annual Report located on our web site at www.mhawisconsin.org.

Does Mental Health America fund other organizations?

No. We do not directly fund other organizations.

What are some of Mental Health America's most widely used resources?

Perhaps MHA's most widely used services are our Information and Assistance Services, including telephone and E-mail assistance, as well as our web site.

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Our Telephone and E-Mail Assistance program receives more than 4,000 calls and emails each year from mental health consumers, family members and professionals with a wide range of questions. Whether the search is for a therapist who accepts Medicaid, a support group, information on a specific mental illness or how to get help if you don't have insurance, we provide timely assistance.

MHA's web site has become an integral part of the Information and Assistance program. With more than 20,000 visits each month; our web site has become one of the best and most up-to-date ways to reach professionals and the general public. MHA's web site includes information on many topics including one of the most comprehensive listings of area support groups; information on MHA programs and services; mental health news; information on specific illnesses; more than 130 mental health fact sheets, public policy updates; community education information; as well as local, state and national links and resources.

We have several online, searchable tools:

- Mental Health, Wellness, and Addiction Services Guide for Milwaukee County
- Support Groups in the Greater Milwaukee Area
- Searchable Therapist Directory

MHA is also available on both Facebook and Twitter now. Visit our web site to access our Facebook and Twitter accounts.

Updated July 2010

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