

## About Mental Illness

### **Mental illnesses are biologically based brain disorders.**

One out of five people in America has a mental illness (more than two million Ohioans), yet less than one-third of affected adults and one-half of children receive treatment. Mental illnesses are biologically based brain disorders. They cannot be overcome through willpower and are not related to a person's character or intelligence. They are medical conditions that disrupt a person's thinking, feeling, mood, daily functioning and ability to relate to others. People affected can be of any age, race, religion or income.

The Global Burden of Disease study, conducted by the World Health Organization, the World Bank and Harvard University, reported that mental illness is second only to cardiovascular disease in regard to burden (i.e., years of life lost to premature death or disability). The cost of leaving mental illnesses untreated is immense; however, issues of mental health and wellness are erupting in every arena. They are connected to the promise of our youth, the productivity of our workforce, the well-being of our elders, the justice in our courts and the fabric of our families.

When mental health services are inaccessible to those in need, the impact is felt in all areas of Ohio's economy and society:

- **Missed educational opportunities and failure in school** (*58 percent of children with mental illness do not graduate from high school.*)
- **Lost productivity and unemployment** (*Employees who are depressed are twice as likely to miss work and seven times more likely to be less productive on the job. Yet, treatment for clinical depression has a high success rate.*)
- **Increased crime and incarceration** (*More than half of Ohio's inmates have some type of mental illness; 12 percent are diagnosed with a severe mental illness. Most youth in juvenile justice facilities have a diagnosable mental disorder.*)
- **Inappropriate use of hospital emergency departments** (*Comprehensive community-based mental health services can cut public hospital admissions and lengths of stay.*)
- **Premature death, including suicide** (*In Ohio, more than 1,300 lives are lost to suicide each year.*)

Without treatment, the consequences of mental illness for the individual and society are staggering: unnecessary disability, unemployment, substance abuse, homelessness, inappropriate incarceration and wasted lives. The economic cost of untreated mental illness is more than \$100 billion each year in the United States.

The good news about mental illness is that recovery is possible. Early identification and treatment is of vital importance. Most people diagnosed with a serious mental illness can experience relief from their symptoms by actively participating in an individual treatment plan.

Society stands to gain from making the same commitment to mental health treatment that it makes to other medical conditions. Recovery and resiliency enable adults and children with serious mental illness to recover and live, work and participate fully in their communities.

## **Ohio Department of Mental Health**