



The Carter Center, in partnership with Emory University, is guided by a fundamental commitment to human rights and the alleviation of human suffering. It seeks to prevent and resolve conflicts, enhance freedom and democracy, and improve health. Under the leadership of former First Lady Rosalynn Carter, a longstanding champion for the rights of people with mental illnesses, the Carter Center's Mental Health

# FOREWORD

Behavioral health conditions impact everyone. Although stereotypes and misperceptions regarding mental health and

Some members of the behavioral health community are using more precise terms such as “prejudice,” “discrimination,” “bias,” and “social exclusion” to describe the negative attitudes and behaviors faced by people living with mental or substance use disorders.

# REPORT BEHAVIORAL HEALTH FACTS

- Scientific research into the causes of and treatments for behavioral

# INCLUDE TREATMENT OPTIONS

Consider reporting the following facts to help minimize barriers to treatment:

- **Treatment is effective.**

- Between 70 and 90 percent of individuals with a mental health condition experience a significant reduction in symptoms and improvement in quality of life after receiving treatment.<sup>15</sup> Research also proves that substance use treatment, including medication, can help patients stop using drugs, avoid relapse, and successfully recover.<sup>16</sup>
- Medications for opioid addiction, like buprenorphine and methadone, do not simply replace one opioid for another. These medications help to stabilize individuals, allowing for treatment of their medical, psychological, and other problems.<sup>17</sup>

- **Treatment is accessible and affordable.**

- Provisions under the Affordable Care Act and the Mental Health Parity and Addictions Equity Act (MHPAEA) improve access to and increase coverage of treatment for mental and substance use disorders. Treatment options include behavioral treatment (such as cognitive behavioral therapy), medication treatment, and recovery support services.<sup>18</sup>
- Through the Affordable Care Act, it is estimated that 32.1 million Americans will gain access to coverage that includes mental and substance use disorder benefits, and an additional 30.4 million Americans will see increased benefits in their coverage.<sup>19</sup>

- **People are supportive of those in treatment.**

- Fewer than one-fifth of Americans say they would think less of a friend or relative in recovery from an addiction.<sup>20</sup> Americans believe treatment works; more than two-thirds agree that treatment and support can help people with mental health issues lead quality lives.<sup>21</sup>

- **Treatment is available.**

- The Mental Health Facility Locator, online at <http://www.mentalhealth.gov>, provides information on more than 8,000 treatment facilities for people with mental health conditions.
- There are approximately 14,500 specialized drug treatment facilities that provide counseling, behavioral therapy, medication, case management, and other types of services to people with substance use disorders.<sup>22</sup>

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## HIGHLIGHT RECOVERY

Recovery is a process of change through which individuals improve their health and wellness, live a self-directed life, and strive to reach their full potential. To help the public understand that people can and do recover, when possible:

- **Tell the story to let people know that recovery is possible.**

- **Suggest that recovery supports are often critical**, and may include support from friends and family, access to housing and meaningful activities such as a job or school, as well as medication, talk therapy, self-help and mutual aid, psychosocial rehabilitation, meditation, exercise, and other treatment options, often in combination. The path to recovery is unique for each individual.

- **Feature individuals in long-term recovery** to show that recovery is possible.

- **Mention support systems**, such as therapy, mutual self-help and peer support, which are important to help people achieve and sustain recovery.

## When Reporting on Violence and Suicide

Most people with mental illnesses, such as schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, and major depression, are not violent and are actually more than four times more likely to be victims of violent crime than the general population.<sup>23</sup> Only 3–5 percent of violent crimes are attributable to people who have been diagnosed with a serious mental illness<sup>24</sup> even though





CONDITION	DESCRIPTION OF SYMPTOMS
Attention Deficit Disorder/ Hyperactivity Disorder (ADD/ADHD)	Inattention or difficulty staying focused, hyperactivity or constantly being in motion or talking, impulsivity (e.g., often not thinking before acting)
Autism Spectrum Disorders	Impaired communication, cognition, social interaction, with various levels of restricted, repetitive behavior, focus, and actions. Includes Autism, Asperger's Disorder, Rett's Disorder, and Childhood Disintegrative Disorder
Bipolar Disorder	Recurrent episodes of highs (mania) and lows (depression) in mood; changes in energy and behavior; extreme irritable or elevated mood; an inflated sense of self-importance; risky

SUBSTANCE	HEALTH EFFECTS
Alcohol	In low doses, intoxication, mild stimulation, relaxation, and lowered inhibitions; in higher doses, drowsiness, slurred speech, nausea, emotional volatility, loss of coordination, visual distortions, impaired memory, sexual dysfunction, loss of consciousness/ increased risk of injuries, violence, fetal damage (in pregnant women), hangover, depression, neurologic deficits, hypertension, liver and heart disease, addiction, fatal overdose
Cocaine	Increased heart rate, blood pressure, body temperature and metabolism, feelings of exhilaration, increased energy, mental alertness, tremors, reduced appetite, irritability, anxiety, panic, paranoia, violent behavior, psychosis, weight loss, insomnia, cardiac or cardiovascular complications, stroke, seizures, addiction, nasal damage from snorting
Ecstasy	Mild hallucinogenic effects, increased tactile sensitivity, empathic feelings, lowered inhibitions, anxiety, chills, sweating, teeth clenching, muscle cramping, sleep disturbances, depression, impaired memory, hyperthermia, addiction
Inhalants	Stimulation, loss of inhibition, headache, nausea or vomiting, slurred speech, loss of motor coordination, wheezing, cramps/muscle weakness, depression, memory impairment, damage to cardiovascular and nervous systems, unconsciousness, sudden death
Heroin	Nodding off, drowsiness, impaired coordination, dizziness, confusion, nausea, sedation, feeling of heaviness in the body, slowed or arrested breathing, constipation, endocarditis, hepatitis, HIV, addiction, fatal overdose
Marijuana	Intoxication, relaxation, slowed reaction time, distorted sensory perception, impaired balance and coordination, increased heart rate and appetite, impaired learning and memory, anxiety, panic attacks, psychosis, cough, frequent respiratory infections, possible mental health decline, addiction
Methamphetamine	

# SOURCES

<sup>1</sup> Entertainment Industries Council. (2012). *Side Guide: Reporting on Men al Health*. Retrieved from <http://www.eiconline.org/teamup/wp-content/>.

