

PRESS RELEASE

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Co-OCCURRING DISORDERS: MENTAL ILLNESS & SUBSTANCE ABUSE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

JACKSON (May 24, 2016) – The 2014 Community Health Assessment completed by the Health Improvement Organization found 26% of Jackson County residents reported being diagnosed with depression by their health care provider within the last year. Also in 2014, 25% of middle school students and 35% of high school students throughout Jackson County fit the criteria for depression.

May is Mental Health Awareness Month. The Jackson County Substance Abuse Prevention Coalition (JCSAPC), LifeWays Community Mental Health, and Most Teens Don't would like to raise awareness of the need to talk about mental illness and its link to substance use and abuse. "Approximately 43.8 million U.S. adults experience mental illness in a given year," says Marla Sanford, Public Relations Coordinator at LifeWays CMH. "And among those who struggle with mental illness, approximately 10.2 million adults have co-occurring mental health and substance use/abuse disorders."

Emma Sigman of JCSAPC and Henry Ford Allegiance Health said adults are not the only victims of mental illness either. "Twenty percent of youth ages 13-18 live with a mental health condition and some are unfamiliar with the signs and symptoms so they don't seek help." Sigman said it is essential to teach youth about the signs and symptoms of mental illness because studies show that 50% of all lifetime cases of mental illness begin by the age of 14.

A mental disorder or a mental illness is a diagnosable illness that affects a person's thinking, emotions, and behavior and disrupts their ability to work or carry out other daily activities and have satisfying personal relationships. Also, addiction is more common in people with mental health disorders. "Many times someone who is struggling with mental illness will turn to substances to self-medicate their symptoms," said Sigman. "Using substances can increase underlying risks for mental illness and cause the symptoms of someone who is already struggling with an illness to become much worse."

According to the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, roughly 50 percent of individuals with severe mental disorders are affected by substance abuse, and in 2014 approximately 7.9 million adults had co-occurring disorders according to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA).

It can be difficult to diagnose a substance abuse problem and a co-occurring disorder and often times what complicates diagnosis is denial. Denial is common with substance abuse and mental illness. Sufferers may wait and hope the symptoms go away, or they may be ashamed or afraid of how they may be viewed.

So what can you do to help? Sanford and Sigman agree that everyone can help by breaking the barriers to recovery. These barriers might include lack of knowledge and/or awareness of the link between mental health and substance use/abuse; learning the signs and symptoms of mental illnesses and substance use/abuse; working to eliminate the stigma attached to both mental illness and addiction; and encouraging those who may be struggling to seek help and or treatment.

More information about:

- *Jackson County Substance Abuse Prevention Coalition* and its activities, please contact Ravenn Moore at (517) 841-7425 or via email at Ravenn.Moore@allegiancehealth.org
- *LifeWays Community Mental Health* and its activities, please contact Marla Sanford at (517) 789-2490 or via email at Marla.Sanford@lifewayscmh.org
- *Most Teens Don't* and its activities, please contact Emma Sigman at (517)205-3782 or via email at Emma.Sigman@allegiancehealth.org

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