

National Minority Mental Health Awareness Month



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July is celebrated as **Black and Indigenous People of Color (BIPOC) Mental Health Awareness Month**, also known as Bebe Moore Campbell **National Minority Mental Health Awareness Month**. This month honors the legacy of the author and activist who brought attention to the intersection of racism and mental health. As we strive for a more inclusive and understanding society, it is crucial to highlight the disparities and barriers that disadvantage BIPOC communities and advocate for a more equitable society.

Although BIPOC and white individuals experience mental illness at similar rates, BIPOC face significantly higher barriers to treatment. According to LyraHealth, 43% of Black people and 47% of Latino people manage their mental health issues independently, compared to 35% of white people. Additionally, only 25% of Asian and Pacific Islanders receive professional help for their mental health struggles. These statistics reflect the barriers that limit access to mental health care for the BIPOC community.

A significant barrier to treatment is the stigma surrounding mental health. In many cultures, mental health issues can be considered taboo and private, discouraging individuals from seeking help due to fear of shame and negative judgment. This stigma can be deeply ingrained, making it difficult for individuals to acknowledge their struggles and seek the support they need. The fear

of being perceived as weak or flawed can prevent many from reaching out for professional help, leading to untreated mental health issues and worsening conditions.

Other barriers include cultural differences, which can lead to misunderstandings and misdiagnosis due to a lack of cultural competence among healthcare providers. Language barriers, as individuals who are not fluent in the dominant language may struggle to communicate their needs effectively. Economic barriers can also pose significant challenges as disparities can restrict access to mental health services, with the cost of treatment, transportation, and time off work being prohibitive. Geographic barriers further limit access, especially for those in rural or underserved urban areas. Additionally, the lack of representation of BIPOC individuals among mental health professionals can make it harder for patients to find culturally sensitive care. Prejudice and discrimination in society and healthcare settings exacerbate mental health issues and create additional barriers to seeking help.

Discussing these barriers is essential as they directly contribute to BIPOC individuals avoiding the help they need. During this month of awareness, it is vital to highlight these disparities and to advocate for societal change where everyone is treated equally and has equal access to necessary resources. This National Minority Mental Health Awareness Month, let's advocate for BIPOC mental health, combat stigma, and work towards a more equitable society. Here are some ways to support National Minority Mental Health Awareness Month and advocate for mental health equity:

Educate Yourself and Others

- **Learn About Mental Health:** Understand the unique mental health challenges faced by BIPOC communities.
- **Share Information:** Use social media, blogs, or community events to spread awareness about BIPOC mental health issues and resources.

Support BIPOC Mental Health Organizations

- **Donate:** Contribute to organizations that provide mental health services to BIPOC communities.

- Volunteer: Offer your time and skills to support mental health initiatives and programs.

Participate in Events

- Attend Workshops and Webinars: Join events focused on BIPOC mental health to learn and show support.
- Organize Events: Host or participate in community events that raise awareness and provide education BIPOC mental health.