What You Should Know About
BIPOC Mental Health Month

In May of 2008, the U.S. House of Representatives designated July as "Bebe Moore Campbell National Minority Mental Health Awareness Month". This month honors the legacy of Bebe Moore Campbell, an African American novelist, journalist, and mental health advocate. It aims to raise awareness about the unique challenges faced by underrepresented groups in mental health and behavioral healthcare in the United States.

Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) face unique challenges when it comes to mental health and well-being. Although they experience mental health issues at higher rates than white Americans, they are less likely to seek and receive treatment. Several factors contribute to this disparity, including stigma, cultural norms, access barriers, and racial trauma. More specifically, within many communities of color, there exists a pervasive *stigma* surrounding mental illness. This stigma can discourage individuals from seeking professional help. Traditional beliefs and *cultural norms* often view mental health struggles as a sign of weakness or personal failing. Consequently, BIPOC may hesitate to seek assistance due to fear of judgement or shame. Structural barriers, such as inadequate health insurance coverage or difficulty finding providers from their racial or ethnic group, hinder *access* to mental health care. Experiencing or witnessing racial discrimination or violence can cause stress and *racial trauma*, impacting mental well-being.

During July, we reflect on the needs of historically underserved communities and work to eliminate stigma while empowering these groups in their mental health journeys. Promoting mental health equity requires collective efforts. We can all play a role by learning about mental health, sharing information, using non-stigmatizing language, and addressing implicit biases and micro aggressions. Let's work together to support the well-being of all individuals, regardless of their racial or ethnic background.