



October Is National Depression Screening Month

Free, Confidential Tool Available Online

If you have symptoms of depression, a free, quick, confidential online screening tool can put you on the path to better health. October is National Depression Screening Month and a time to access online depression screening and seek treatment.

If you suffer from depression, you are not alone—more than 50% of Americans now meet the clinical definition of depression or anxiety disorder. The average share of adults reporting symptoms of depressive disorder and/or anxiety disorder jumped from 11% in January 2019 to 41% in January 2021. The pandemic has had significant impact on many people's mental health.

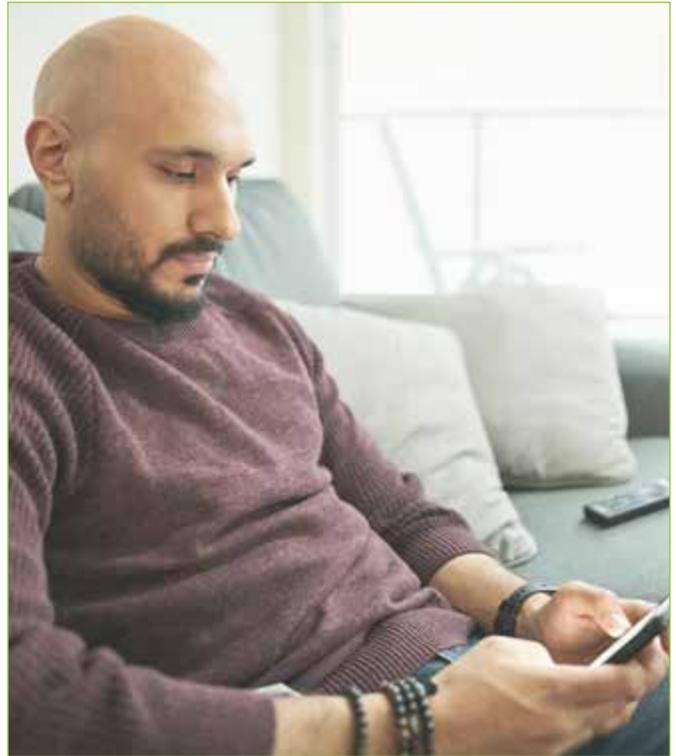
A screening takes only a few minutes and, when finished, you receive information about potential next steps based on the results. A screening does not indicate a diagnosis, but it's a helpful tool for understanding your mental health and a starting point for reaching out for help.

Screening—Mental Health Advocates of WNY

According to Kelly Miskovski, director of community outreach, Mental Health Advocates of WNY, checking up on your mental health is just as important as going to the doctor for a physical checkup.

"Clinical depression is a serious medical illness that affects men and women of all ages, races, and socio-economic groups," Miskovski said. "Taking a mental health screening is one of the quickest and easiest ways to determine whether you are experiencing symptoms of a mental health condition."

According to Miskovski, if the tool indicates that the individual is experiencing symptoms of depression, there is a brief narrative that comes up at the end of the screening with information on what the screening results mean and what you can do as the next step.



"There's an option to email your results to yourself so that you can show a professional," she said. "There is also a search tool to find local treatment providers by entering your zip code. Additionally, there are several links to different topics related to depression so that the individual can educate themselves on the condition."

Depression is one of the most common mental disorders in the U.S. and research suggests that depression is caused by a combination of genetic, biological, environmental, and psychological factors.

According to the National Institute of Mental Health, depression can happen at any age, but often begins in adulthood. Risk factors include personal or family history of depression, major life changes, trauma, or stress or certain physical illnesses and medications.

Depression, even the most severe cases, can be treated. The earlier that treatment can begin, the more effective it is. Depression is usually treated with [medications](#), [psychotherapy](#), or a combination of the two.

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Finding a Therapist

Riannon Martin, clinical director, Spectrum Health and Human Services' downtown counseling center, says finding a counselor does not need to be difficult but it's important to find the right one.

"You can ask your primary medical doctor as they usually have a list of local mental health clinics they will refer individuals to," Martin said. "Additionally, *Psychology Today* is a great resource to utilize. It has a list of professionals in your surrounding area including their specialties. This can help match a counselor with your needs and goals."

Another resource to help individuals arrange counseling is to contact *Mental Health Advocates of WNY* at 716-886-1242 and talk with an information & referral specialist.

Additional options:

- If you are in crisis, call *Crisis Services* at 716-834-3131 or the 24-Hour Addiction Hotline at 716-831-7007
- Call 211 to access the complete database of services in your area
- Erie County Department of Mental Health offers a list of agencies: www3.erie.gov/mentalhealth/list-contract-agencies
- Erie County Anti-Stigma Coalition resource page lists agencies offering mental health providers: letstalkstigma.org/the-resources/resources

Referrals are not needed, and most insurances are accepted for mental health treatment. Many operate on a sliding scale for patients without insurance.

According to Martin, the first session will include you and the counselor establishing a therapeutic relationship, understanding the counseling process and services. Additionally, the counselor will gather information to understand what brings you in for counseling services.

"Don't be afraid to already have a list of questions for the counselor, especially if this is your first counseling experience. Additionally, it is good to have a set of your own personal expectations and goals," she said. ■

Depression can present different symptoms, depending on the person. But for most people, depressive disorder changes how they function day-to-day, and typically for more than two weeks. Common symptoms include:

- Changes in sleep
- Changes in appetite
- Lack of concentration
- Loss of energy
- Lack of interest in activities
- Hopelessness or guilty thoughts
- Changes in movement (less activity or agitation)
- Physical aches and pains
- Suicidal thoughts

NAMI

Knowing a depressed person can affect you too. The most important thing to do is to help him/her get an appropriate diagnosis and treatment. Other ways to lend a hand:

- Offer emotional support, understanding, patience and encouragement.
- Be a good listener.
- Never ignore comments about suicide; report them to your friend's relative or doctor or call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at (800) 273-TALK.
- Invite your friend to do things with you; if he/she declines, keep trying, but don't push.
- Remind your friend that with time and treatment, the depression will lift.

NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF MENTAL HEALTH

ERIE COUNTY
ANTI-STIGMA
COALITION

Erie County Anti-Stigma Coalition Founding Members:

BryLin Behavioral Health System • Children's Mental Health Coalition of Western New York, Inc. • Community Partners of Western New York • Compeer • Crisis Services of Erie County • Erie County Department of Mental Health • Erie County Office for People with Disabilities • Fellows Action Network • Fuerst Consulting Corporation • Jewish Family Service of Buffalo & Erie County • The Mental Health Advocates of WNY • Millennium Collaborative Care • Patrick P. Lee Foundation • Preventionfocus, Inc. • Telesco Creative Group • The Peter and Elizabeth C. Tower Foundation

A Q&A with Leadership Buffalo

Leadership Buffalo is *Making Buffalo Better*. Through collaborations, community awareness, and civic engagement, Leadership Buffalo is uniting leaders to take action. Six programs educate individuals and provide resources to make a difference. Participants explore the challenges, concepts, complexity and practice of leadership around important issues through a series of day sessions.

Leadership Buffalo unites leaders from diverse backgrounds and increases their knowledge of community issues, broadens their vision and enhances their ability to lead. Through these programs, Leadership Buffalo has expanded Western New York's social capital by graduating more than 4,000 individuals. We recently spoke with **Jenna Luehrsen, director of marketing and events**.

Why did your organization become a member of The Anti-Stigma Coalition?

Stigma often deters people from getting the correct support they need to improve their mental health, which can lead individuals down the wrong path or prohibit them from living their best life.

What impact is the Campaign having in the community?

People are no longer afraid to share their story, people seek support and guidance, people are willing to help one another struggling with similar things. People can be proud of who they are. Without stigma, mental health doesn't have to define you; instead, it can be used as a step to get you to the next, very important, part of your life.

What impact is the campaign having?

We just joined the coalition, so I don't really feel equipped to answer that question in detail, but I am looking forward to being more involved in efforts to open discussions about mental health and break down the stigma so everyone can get the help they need. ■

MEMBER SPOTLIGHT



Upcoming Events

OCTOBER 6 & OCTOBER 13

Back to School: Navigating a New Normal
WBFO 3-part Series

OCTOBER 7

National Depression Screening Day
Mental Health Advocates of WNY

OCTOBER 14

Facebook Live - Depression Screening & Seeking Treatment
Erie County Anti-Stigma Coalition Facebook Live

More Events & Information: Visit letstalkstigma.org/events

WELCOME TO OUR NEWEST MEMBERS



Visit letstalkstigma.org/current-members for more information on our current members.

BECOME A MEMBER OF THE ERIE COUNTY ANTI-STIGMA COALITION

Does your organization, church, temple, or community group want to combine forces with our organization? Do you individually want to engage with us to stop the stigma of mental illness? Please consider becoming a member of our Coalition by completing our membership form at letstalkstigma.org/support/pledge.

It is going to take a massive community effort to move the needle on stigma, please become a part of the solution. Questions? Please contact Karl Shallowhorn, at kshallowhorn@chcb.net.