



## Older Adults and Mental Health— Don't Suffer in Silence

According to the CDC, suicide rates are on the rise among people aged 65 and older. Causes of suicide in older adults range from depression to grief over the passing of loved ones, to chronic illness.

While depression is a common problem among older adults, the National Institute of Aging says that clinical depression is not a normal part of aging. In fact, studies show that most older adults feel satisfied with their lives, despite having more illnesses or physical problems than younger people.

However, individuals who experienced depression as a younger person may be more likely to have depression as an older adult.

According to John Jones, older adults can experience stigma which can prevent people talking about their mental health or seeking help.

“Ageism exists, unfortunately, and with it preconceived notions about what it means to some to be an ‘older adult,’” he said. “Society sometimes unfortunately gives negative connotation to aging.”

If they understand that depression and anxiety are common, older adults can learn about the signs and seek out a health care provider to receive treatment.

“I am aware of seniors that have dealt with depression, spoke about it, sought treatment and as a result now are coping better, and living healthier more fulfilling lives with better mental health,” Jones said.

### **What are some ways to stay mentally health?**

Jones says some actions are proper exercise and nutrition, socialization amongst peers, maintaining connections, and staying involved in the community.

If you or an older adult you know exhibits suicidal thoughts or behavior, you can help—including by calling the 988 suicide prevention helpline.

## A healthy lifestyle changes can have long-term benefits to your mental health.

### **HERE ARE A FEW STEPS TO TAKE:**

- ✔ Be physically active and eat a health, balanced diet. This may help avoid illnesses that can bring on disability or depression.
- ✔ Get 7 – 9 hours of sleep each night.
- ✔ Stay in touch with friends and family.
- ✔ Participate in activities that you enjoy.
- ✔ Let friends, family, and your physician know when you're experiencing symptoms of depression.



## We recently spoke to Sheila Hunt, Chief Program Officer at OLV Human Services

*We talked about OLV's mission and how they promote mental wellness. OLV Human Services has providers who are the voice for our families and strong advocates for them. We also promote self-care and encourage staff to take care of their own mental and physical health needs.*

### Why did your organization become a member of the Erie County Anti-Stigma Coalition?

OLV Human Services provides an array of programs and services to more than 12,000 children, youth, adults, and families in the region, with a vast majority of services in the communities where our families live and are most comfortable. We also provide mental health services to children and adolescents in our mental health clinics. OLV Human Services became a member of the Erie County Anti-Stigma Coalition because—as an agency providing services to those with behavioral health needs—we wanted to help address the rise in mental health illness that providers were noticing in adolescents and adults. When our agency became aware of the “stop the stigma” campaign in 2019, we wanted to better equip our staff with the tools needed to educate those they serve on mental health awareness topics. Stigma comes from a lack of understanding of mental health illnesses coupled with fear or embarrassment, which can often prevent a person from receiving needed treatment.

### How are your clients with mental health challenges impacted by stigma?

Because of the lack of understanding of mental health illnesses, people with mental health challenges often find it more difficult to find suitable employment or housing because of discrimination

They may also become victims of violence because of their mental health illnesses. People fear what they don't know and when they don't understand/relate to a person living with mental health illness, they are sometimes afraid to rent to them or employ them. Mental health awareness is key to stopping the stigma!

### What is your organization doing to address stigma and enhance mental wellness for the people you serve as well as employees and volunteers?

OLV Human Services has providers who are the voice for our families and strong advocates for them. We also promote self-care and encourage staff to take care of their own mental and physical health needs. Working in the human services field, you sometimes give so much of yourself to take care of others that you fail to take care of yourself. We promote our mental health clinic—not only to clients—but also to staff. Some of our staff who aren't licensed providers have received mental health first aid training, which helps them identify, understand, and respond to signs of mental illness and substance use disorders. We are trying to get all our community-based staff/staff working with youth and adults trained in mental health first aid.

## SHARE THE CONVERSATION

1

### SHARE EMAIL NEWSLETTERS

Share the monthly newsletter to your team via email or print the PDF.

2

### SHARE SOCIAL MEDIA POSTS

Share posts to your professional and personal networks and help promote Facebook Live events.

@talkstigma

3

### REQUEST MATERIALS TO DISTRIBUTE

Brochures, Conversation Starter Cards, Counter Displays, Pop-up Banners, Add logos and graphics to your website or other collateral.

✉ [karen@LetsTalkStigma.org](mailto:karen@LetsTalkStigma.org)



## UPCOMING EVENTS

### Family-to-Family Class

**Mondays, January 22- March 11 | 6:00-8:30pm**

**NAMI | Zoom**

This 8-week class is offered for free to family and caregivers of a loved one who has mental illness.

### Endeavor Health presets Mental Health First Aid

**Contact: [equinn@ehsny.org](mailto:equinn@ehsny.org) | call (716)560-1452**

Teaches how to identify, understand, and respond to signs of mental health and substance use challenges and teaches how to recognize the warning signs of suicide crisis and how to question, persuade, and refer someone to help.

### Mindful Music airing weekly on WBFO

**Saturdays: 4 PM - Sundays: 8 PM**

**Buffalo Toronto Public Media**

Mindful Music explores the intersection of music and mental health by providing a backdrop for conversations with guests who share how they use music to express their inner nature and manage their emotional wellbeing. Hosted by Karl Shallowhorn

### NAMI Programs

NAMI offers facilitated, confidential support groups for adult family members and caregivers concerned about and/or caring for a person with mental illness. Click here for full calendar and registration information.

Visit [namibuffalony.org/programs/calendar](http://namibuffalony.org/programs/calendar).

Visit [letstalkstigma.org/events](http://letstalkstigma.org/events) for more.

ERIE COUNTY  
**ANTI-STIGMA**  
COALITION

### ERIE COUNTY ANTI-STIGMA COALITION FOUNDING MEMBERS

BryLin Hospital • 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