



## Stigma is Common for Residents of Rural Communities

Isolation, concerns about confidentiality, and a tradition of self-reliance can lead to significant stigma for individuals with mental health challenges living in rural communities. In addition, most rural areas lack adequate mental health services.

According to NAMI, among U.S adults in non-metropolitan areas compared to suburban and urban residents, rural Americans must travel twice as far to their nearest hospital

and are twice as likely to lack broadband internet which limits access to telehealth.

NAMI also reports that more than 25 million rural Americans live in a Mental Health Professional Shortage Area, where there are too few providers to meet demand. where Rural youth are at an increased risk of suicide, yet highly rural areas have fewer youth suicide prevention services.

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A Facebook Live event to discuss mental health stigma in rural communities will be held in March. Panelists include Jeffrey Winton, Founder and Chairman of Rural Minds™; and Connie Desmarais, Community Coalitions Coordinator, Niagara County Department of Mental Health & Substance Abuse Services.



The event is free and open to the public. Questions from viewer are welcome during the presentation.

Ruralminds.org is a non-profit organization created to serve as the informed voice for mental health in rural America and provide mental health information and resources.

“Compared to people who live in urban areas, rural Americans experience higher rates of depression and suicide, but are less likely to access mental healthcare services. Suicide rates among people living in rural areas are 64% to 68% higher compared to people living in large urban areas.”

If you or someone you know is experiencing a mental health, suicide or substance use crisis or emotional distress, call 24-Hour Crisis Hotline at 716-834-3131, reach out 24/7 to the

988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline (formerly known as the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline) by dialing or texting 988 or using chat services at [suicidepreventionlifeline.org](https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org) to connect to a trained crisis counselor. You can also get crisis text support via the Crisis Text Line by texting NAMI to 741741.



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## RURAL LIFESTYLE CHALLENGES TO MENTAL HEALTH INCLUDE:

- Self-imposed barrier of asking for help when taught to pursue self-reliance as a virtue.
- Lack of trust in anyone to maintain confidentiality in a small, close-knit community.
- Fear of negative judgement from others as being incompetent or less capable
- Difficulty getting an appointment with limited availability of mental health professionals.
- Time and transportation required for long-distance travel to meet with a mental health professional.
- Unreliable, expensive, or nonexistent internet service for online video or telehealth appointments.
- Lack of adequate health insurance coverage.
- Feeling of isolation without having access to talk with someone outside of the community who understands mental health challenges.

**Tragically, due to insufficient services for those most in need, the mental health crisis responder for most rural Americans is a law enforcement officer.**

*Ruralminds.org*



“Compared to people who live in urban areas, rural Americans experience higher rates of depression and suicide, but are less likely to access mental healthcare services.”

**JEFFREY WINTON**

**RURAL MINDS™ FOUNDER AND CHAIRMAN**



### WHAT DO YOU WANT TO TALK ABOUT?

Is there a topic that you'd like us to cover in an upcoming newsletter or Facebook Live? Let us know!

Email [info@letstalkstigma.org](mailto:info@letstalkstigma.org) to start the conversation.



## We recently spoke with Sue Gange, who with her team, answered the following questions about stigma and mental health.

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

The Genesee-Orleans-Wyoming (GOW) Pathway to Hope project is a collaborative effort that focuses on mental health and suicide prevention in those counties. We know that stigma is a big part of the reason that individuals don't talk about or seek treatment for those issues. When our team became aware of the Anti-Stigma Coalition, we thought it would be a great partnership to work on breaking down the barriers that prevent people from getting the help they may need. We noticed your [letstalkstigma.org](http://letstalkstigma.org) website and messaging and felt it is personable and well executed, especially the videos on your site.

### How are individuals with mental health challenges impacted by stigma?

Stigma is defined as a mark of shame or disgrace associated with a particular circumstance, quality, or person. Often those with mental health challenges can feel like they are flawed in some way, which can lead to shame and the desire to isolate from others, which we know is not good for our mental health. Often those feeling stigmatized refuse to seek help because they feel targeted in some way.

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

Knowing that stigma can delay people seeking treatment, we hope to keep the conversation around mental health and suicide prevention going. Through our public awareness activities, we hope to let communities know that there is no shame in having a mental illness is a priority for our coalition as well. Seeking help can be a sign of strength. We encourage people to reach out for help that works best for them. We actively and openly discuss our personal and lived experiences surrounding mental health and suicide during community and coalition events. Our goal is to instill hope in others as well as to make change to reduce stigma and encourage help seeking behaviors.

WELCOME NEW MEMBER





## 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)



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

## UPCOMING EVENTS

### L.E.T.S. Save Lives

March 28 | 2:00 – 3:00 PM

Hosted by American Foundation for Suicide Prevention

L.E.T.S. (listening, empathy, trust, support) Save Lives: An Introduction to Suicide Prevention for Black and African American Communities is a presentation created by and for Black people, designed to reduce cultural stigma, foster conversations about mental health, and raise awareness of suicide prevention for individuals who identify as Black or African American. Visit [afsp.org](http://afsp.org) for more information.

### New Directions Youth & Family Services Celebration

March 28 | 2:00 – 3:00 PM

John R. Yurtchuk Student Center at Daemen University

For families from Erie County who utilize mental health systems of care. Free evening of family activities and inspirational speaker Melanie Funchess. RSVP 716-983-3558.

### 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

### 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.