



# Make It OK

10 Year Report to the Community

# Together, we can Make It OK

Make It OK is a community campaign to reduce the stigma of mental illnesses. By changing attitudes about mental health and illnesses, we can increase understanding and create caring conversations. We encourage people in our community to:



## Learn

Learn about stigma and its impact, common misconceptions about mental health and illnesses, facts about mental illnesses and available resources.

## Talk

Talk about mental health and illnesses more openly and compassionately. Help others feel more comfortable knowing what to say, so we can stop the silence and have caring and informed conversations.

## Share

Share the message of hope and what we can do to Make It OK. Share resources and help educate others. Train ambassadors to help share the message and mobilize Make It OK within their communities.

# Why stigma matters

Stigma surrounding mental health and illnesses can lead to isolation, shame and delay in seeking care. Stigma creates barriers to education, employment and housing. Ending stigma creates more caring communities and empowers people to access the care and support they deserve. The sooner people get treatment, the greater their chances of recovery.

It's OK to have a mental illness – many of us do. Mental illnesses are common and treatable medical conditions. A mental illness can affect anyone, regardless of age, race, gender, religion or income.



1 in 5 adults will experience a mental illness each year.<sup>1</sup>



More than 50% of adults will be diagnosed with a mental illness or disorder at some point in their lifetime.<sup>2</sup>

Community mental health and well-being was ranked as the top priority in the HealthPartners Community Health Needs Assessment. Community conversations consistently recognized mental health as a topic needing greater attention and resources.

*“Being a Make It OK ambassador is meaningful to me as it sharpens my skills to be able to curate conversations with anyone about mental health. I am able to normalize conversations about mental health with friends, family and communities.”*



**Bhar Sikakane**  
Make It OK Ambassador  
HealthPartners Behavioral  
Health Case Manager

*“We are taught as children about illnesses like colds, broken bones or surgeries, but mental illnesses aren't discussed. Mental illnesses should be discussed like diabetes ... it needs to be seen as a 'normal' illness.”*

– IMPACT survey respondent, 2018

**9 out of 10**

Make It OK ambassadors say this work is more important than ever.<sup>3</sup>

**93%**

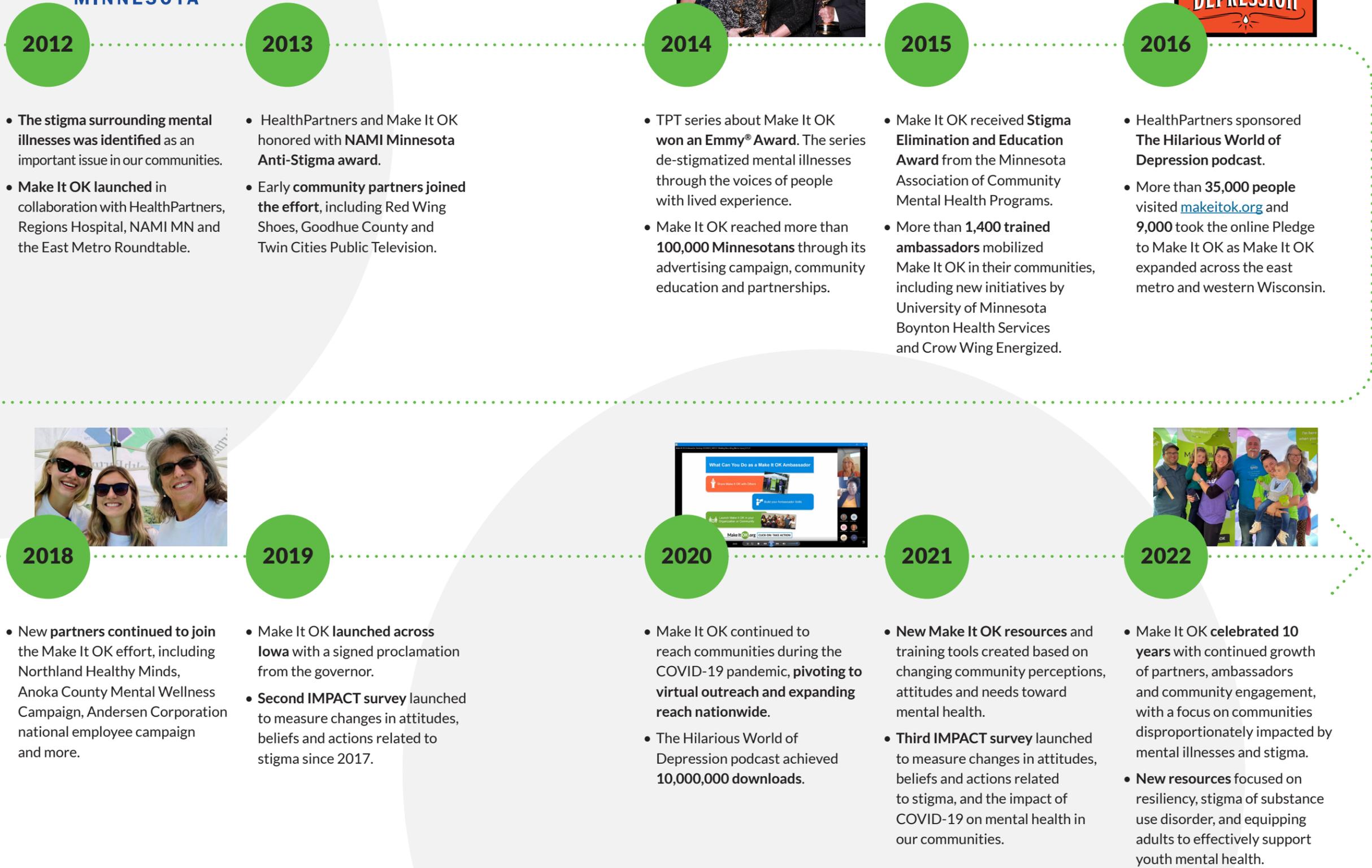
Individuals surveyed think the goal of Make It OK is important.<sup>4</sup>

1 NAMI. [nami.org/mhstats](http://nami.org/mhstats)  
2 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention  
3 2020 Make It OK Ambassador survey  
4 2021 IMPACT survey

# Make It OK



## A DECADE OF MILESTONES



**2012**

- The stigma surrounding mental illnesses was identified as an important issue in our communities.
- Make It OK launched in collaboration with HealthPartners, Regions Hospital, NAMI MN and the East Metro Roundtable.

**2013**

- HealthPartners and Make It OK honored with NAMI Minnesota Anti-Stigma award.
- Early community partners joined the effort, including Red Wing Shoes, Goodhue County and Twin Cities Public Television.

**2014**

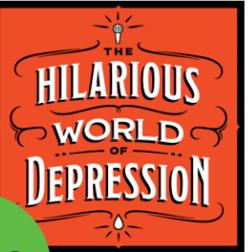


- TPT series about Make It OK won an Emmy® Award. The series de-stigmatized mental illnesses through the voices of people with lived experience.
- Make It OK reached more than 100,000 Minnesotans through its advertising campaign, community education and partnerships.

**2015**

- Make It OK received Stigma Elimination and Education Award from the Minnesota Association of Community Mental Health Programs.
- More than 1,400 trained ambassadors mobilized Make It OK in their communities, including new initiatives by University of Minnesota Boynton Health Services and Crow Wing Energized.

**2016**



- HealthPartners sponsored The Hilarious World of Depression podcast.
- More than 35,000 people visited [makeitok.org](http://makeitok.org) and 9,000 took the online Pledge to Make It OK as Make It OK expanded across the east metro and western Wisconsin.

**2017**



- The Hilarious World of Depression podcast won a Webby Award. This podcast by John Moe was named a best podcast by seven different media sources.
- Make It OK partnered with HealthPartners Institute to launch the first IMPACT survey on community attitudes, beliefs and awareness.

**2018**



- New partners continued to join the Make It OK effort, including Northland Healthy Minds, Anoka County Mental Wellness Campaign, Andersen Corporation national employee campaign and more.

**2019**

- Make It OK launched across Iowa with a signed proclamation from the governor.
- Second IMPACT survey launched to measure changes in attitudes, beliefs and actions related to stigma since 2017.

**2020**



- Make It OK continued to reach communities during the COVID-19 pandemic, pivoting to virtual outreach and expanding reach nationwide.
- The Hilarious World of Depression podcast achieved 10,000,000 downloads.

**2021**

- New Make It OK resources and training tools created based on changing community perceptions, attitudes and needs toward mental health.
- Third IMPACT survey launched to measure changes in attitudes, beliefs and actions related to stigma, and the impact of COVID-19 on mental health in our communities.

**2022**



- Make It OK celebrated 10 years with continued growth of partners, ambassadors and community engagement, with a focus on communities disproportionately impacted by mental illnesses and stigma.
- New resources focused on resiliency, stigma of substance use disorder, and equipping adults to effectively support youth mental health.

For a detailed summary of the IMPACT survey, visit [makeitok.org/impact](http://makeitok.org/impact).

# Measuring progress across communities

HealthPartners is committed to measuring the impact of Make It OK in our communities over time through the IMPACT survey – a partnership with HealthPartners Institute. This community survey measures attitudes and awareness about mental health and illness stigma in the communities where Make It OK is active. Stigma is measured by multiple questions on the IMPACT survey. Overall, community stigma has decreased, yet there's still work to be done. These results provide insights that help Make It OK develop resources and messages that best support communities in reducing the stigma of mental illnesses.



## WHAT DO PEOPLE THINK OF MENTAL HEALTH AND ILLNESSES?

Nearly **6 out of 10** survey respondents agree that there is mental illness stigma in their communities.

Almost half of respondents believe that people are not caring or sympathetic to people with mental illnesses.

More than **1 in 3** respondents told us they're more comfortable helping a person with a physical illness than a mental illness.

**93% of people** think the goal of Make It OK is important.

At least **3 out of 4** respondents are ready to take action to stop the stigma of mental illnesses or have already taken action.



## ARE PEOPLE COMFORTABLE SEEKING CARE?

As we work together to reduce stigma, it's also important to recognize that some members of our communities face additional barriers to seeking mental health care. In the IMPACT survey results, respondents who are people of color indicated that they were more reluctant to seek care for their mental health. A history of trauma in health care and systems has resulted in mistrust for many in communities of color. Recognizing these barriers will help guide expanded partnerships and outreach, to ensure equitable access to information about stigma and mental illnesses, as well as community and care resources for our entire community.



## ARE PEOPLE COMFORTABLE TALKING ABOUT MENTAL ILLNESSES?

In 2021, **1 out of 4** respondents were still uncomfortable talking with someone about mental illnesses.

Nearly **1 in 3** respondents told us they would not tell their friends that they live with a mental illness.



## HOW HAS COVID-19 IMPACTED MENTAL ILLNESS STIGMA?

In 2021, the IMPACT survey explored the impacts of COVID-19.

- **Awareness of mental health issues had increased** due to more media coverage and personal conversations.
- **An increase in mental illness symptoms and an interruption in care** in their communities.
- **A continued lack of knowledge and understanding** of mental health and mental illnesses in general.

*"Make It OK is committed to evaluating its progress over time and sharing its findings. The HealthPartners Institute designed the IMPACT survey to systematically measure attitudes and perceptions of mental health and illnesses over time. This enables data-driven decision making as we learn what opportunities exist to continue to reduce the stigma of mental illnesses and improve community health."*



**Jeanette Ziegenfuss, PhD**  
Director of Survey & Evaluation Science  
Center for Evaluation and Survey Research  
HealthPartners Institute

For a detailed summary of the IMPACT survey, visit [makeitok.org/impact](https://makeitok.org/impact).

# Make It OK community partnerships

## ST. CLOUD WELLBEING INITIATIVE

The St. Cloud Wellbeing Initiative promotes health and well-being resources and programs to 17 member organizations in the St. Cloud, MN community through partnership with HealthPartners, the Greater St. Cloud Development Corp and local employers. In 2021, the initiative decided to support employee mental health and well-being during a time of chronic and acute stress due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Focusing on mental health and well-being helped the initiative get the ball rolling in all areas of well-being for employees.

“The workplace is a place to talk about mental health because it impacts day-to-day functioning,” said Jen Holper from HealthPartners.

Since launching Make It OK, the St. Cloud Wellbeing Initiative has reached over 20,000 employees with Make It OK messaging, trained 33 ambassadors and over 500 people have attended a Make It OK presentation. When asked about the importance of promoting Make It OK in their organizations, there was agreement it’s the right thing to do. Jody Rindfleisch with Altimate Medical Holding, Inc. shared, “Make It OK is a strong message that is already



**Employees at Initiative Foundation**  
A partner organization of the St. Cloud Wellbeing Initiative, “go green” in honor of World Mental Health Awareness Day

prepared and laid out. Why wouldn’t we want to join the effort? If you can impact one person, encourage one person to get help, then it is worth it. We can make such a difference in people’s lives by making it OK to talk about mental health and mental illnesses.”

Read the St. Cloud Wellbeing Initiative’s story at [makeitok.org/stcloudinitiative](https://makeitok.org/stcloudinitiative).



## CROW WING ENERGIZED

Crow Wing Energized is a county-wide grassroots movement in partnership with Crow Wing County, MN, Essentia Health and other partners to improve the health and well-being of county residents. Karen Johnson, a community health specialist, helped lead the Crow Wing Energized Movement since 2019.

In 2014, Crow Wing Energized launched the Make It OK campaign after seeing a need to focus on mental health. Karen stated, “It was apparent people were not talking about mental health and were apprehensive because of the stigma surrounding it.”

### LAUNCHING IN CROW WING COUNTY IN 2014:

- 200 ambassadors trained to help share the message.
- 3,600-plus people attended a Make It OK community presentation.
- Essentia Health offered regular Make It OK presentations as a training opportunity for staff.

Reflecting on the importance of ambassadors, Karen shared, “Whoever is passionate about reducing the stigma of mental illnesses can be an ambassador and help lead this work.”



Left to right: **Kelli Johnson**, SHIP coordinator; **Kara Schaefer** and **Karen Johnson**, Community Health Specialists at Crow Wing Energized

Since launching Make It OK, Crow Wing Energized believes they’re seeing a more compassionate, caring community. Karen says they have a way to go, but it’s something they continue to work on every day. “I can’t stress enough the ease of using Make It OK. It is plug and play. I think it’s a message that everybody needs to hear. We want more compassionate and caring communities. That’s what Make It OK helps to do.”

Read the Crow Wing Energized’s story at [makeitok.org/crowwingenergized](https://makeitok.org/crowwingenergized).



*“NAMI Minnesota has been a key partner with Make It OK since the beginning, together raising awareness of mental illnesses and encouraging early identification and treatment. Make It OK opens the conversation about mental illnesses, educates people about symptoms and connects people to NAMI Minnesota and other community partners to learn more and obtain support. This is important work for our communities!”*



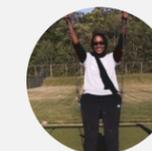
**Sue Abderholden, MPH**  
Executive Director  
NAMI Minnesota

*“While working to increase awareness of behavioral health services, stigma is still the most frustrating barrier to overcome. Make It OK is helping to remove these barriers.”*



**Peter VanDusartz MA, LCSW, ICS**  
SAC Director of Behavioral Health  
HealthPartners

*“As an ambassador, I have gained and learned ways to talk about stigma and ways to continue to fight stigma and educate others.”*



**Fatuma Farah**  
Make It OK Ambassador  
HealthPartners Behavioral  
Health Case Manager

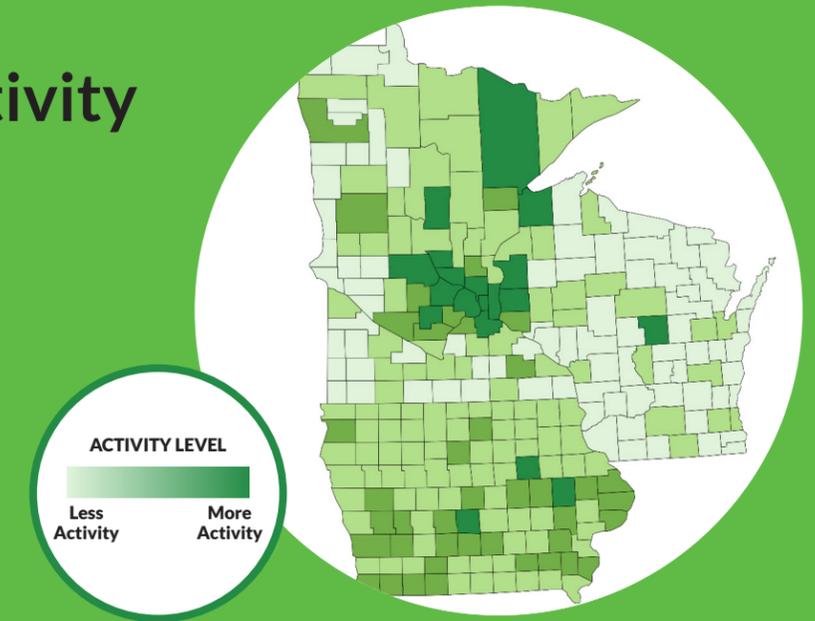
# Make It OK by the numbers

- 25,000+** people reached by Make It OK ambassadors
- 10,000+** people reached through Make It OK presentations
- 17,000,000+** downloads of The Hilarious World of Depression podcast
- 20,325** pledges taken to stand against stigma
- 5,000+** ambassadors trained
- 2,000+** toolkit downloads (since 2019) nationwide
- 6,517** IMPACT survey respondents (2017-2021)
- 250,000,000+** viewings of Make It OK ads
- 421,459** visits to Make It OK website

# Make It OK activity

Communities are active with Make It OK in many ways, including:

- Ambassador trainings
- Community presentations and events
- Community-wide campaigns
- Organization-wide campaigns
- Toolkit downloads
- And more!



## MAKE IT OK AMBASSADOR

Joyce works as a case manager for HealthPartners Behavioral Health. Growing up in rural Mississippi with seven siblings, some family members suffered from a mental illness, but treatment was never discussed. The topic of mental illnesses was taboo, leading to negative assumptions about a person being “crazy.” “Reducing stigma is important to me because I’ve watched family members not get the help they needed,” Joyce says when asked why she decided to become an ambassador. “I’ve seen far too much unnecessary suffering and uncertainty about where to turn for help.”

Joyce’s first presentation as an ambassador was at a faith community, which inspired her to continue creating caring conversations in her community wherever she could. Joyce attended the National Baptist Conference on Christian Education in 2018, where she did a lot of coaching. She felt honored to contribute to the creation of a safe space for people to ask questions about mental illnesses, share their stories and discuss their struggles.

Joyce encourages others to become a Make It OK ambassador. “It’s the most important work we can do for our community. Getting people access to Make It OK and allowing them to talk openly without fear or shame. Once you become an ambassador you will help someone, even if you don’t hear about it. People are taking in the information.”

Read Joyce’s entire story at [makeitok.org/joyce](https://makeitok.org/joyce).



**Joyce Coleman**  
Make It OK Ambassador  
HealthPartners Behavioral  
Health Case Manager

## MAKE IT OK IN IOWA, THE HEALTHIEST STATE INITIATIVE

The Healthiest State Initiative works to inspire Iowans and their communities to improve their health and happiness by engaging with worksites, communities, schools, retail food, organizations, institutions and individuals.

Make It OK got its start in Iowa in 2019 when HealthPartners UnityPoint Health sponsored Mental Health: Mind Matters at the Science Center of Iowa. “We knew the work couldn’t just start and end there with the Mind Matters exhibit and we needed to continue the conversation around stigma statewide to really help reduce the stigma and address the issue broadly,” said Jami Haberl, Executive Director of Iowa Healthiest State Initiative.

Within months of launching Make It OK in Iowa, the Healthiest State Initiative held its first ambassador training. Today, they have trained over 1,000 Make It OK ambassadors and have 334 registered Make It OK workplaces, reaching approximately 232,000 Iowans, with an additional 6,300 Iowans reached through monthly community-facing presentations.

The initiative describes the campaign as an entry point into the mental health space, emphasizing the ease with which it can be shared with others. Jami emphasized the importance of building and maintaining momentum of Make It OK in Iowa communities by saying, “If we can reach four out of five of Iowans that don’t have a mental illness and encourage them to have caring conversations, we win.”

Read the Healthiest State Initiative’s entire story at [makeitok.org/iowahealthieststate](https://makeitok.org/iowahealthieststate).



**Jami Haberl**  
Executive Director  
Iowa Healthiest State Initiative



# Stopping the stigma doesn't end here

*"Make It OK continues to make meaningful and measurable impact by stopping the stigma of mental illness throughout our communities, yet the work is not done. Stigma creates barriers to conversations, support, trust and seeking care, especially for those most vulnerable. HealthPartners continues to support this important and collaborative work alongside many partners to champion our community commitment to mental health and well-being for all."*



**Pahoua Hoffman**  
Senior Vice President  
Community and Government Relations  
HealthPartners

## Get involved with Make It OK

1. Take the pledge at [makeitok.org/take-the-pledge](https://makeitok.org/take-the-pledge) to show your commitment to ending the stigma of mental health and illnesses.
2. **Become an ambassador.** Join us for a free, two-hour virtual training. Learn more and register at [makeitok.org/take-action](https://makeitok.org/take-action).
3. **Launch Make It OK in your community or organization.** Learn how you can roll out the Make It OK campaign at [makeitok.org/take-action](https://makeitok.org/take-action).

### SUPPORT MAKE IT OK

Make It OK is made possible by HealthPartners with generous support from many community partners. You can join the effort to stop the stigma with a gift to Make It OK. Donate at [makeitok.org/donate](https://makeitok.org/donate).

**TOGETHER, WE CAN STOP THE STIGMA.**

### HELP IS AVAILABLE

Make It OK is a campaign for everyone. Additional resources are available at [makeitok.org/resources](https://makeitok.org/resources).

#### NATIONAL

##### Suicide and Crisis Lifeline

Call or text **988**  
(en Español **888-628-9454**)  
Chat [988lifeline.org](https://988lifeline.org)

##### Veterans Crisis Line

Call **988**, press **1** or text **838255**

**National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) Helpline**  
Call **800-950-NAMI(6264)**

##### Trevor Project

Call **866-488-7386** or text **678-678**

##### United Way 2-1-1

Call **211** for free referrals to health and human service programs, community services and disaster services.

#### MINNESOTA

**Minnesota Farm & Rural Helpline**  
at **833-600-2670**

NAMI MN at [namimn.org](https://namimn.org)

#### WISCONSIN

**Farmer Wellness Helpline**  
at **888-901-2558**

NAMI WI at [namiwisconsin.org](https://namiwisconsin.org)

#### IOWA

**Your Life Iowa - 24/7 crisis support**  
Call **855-581-8111** or text **855-895-8398**

NAMI Iowa at [namiowa.org](https://namiowa.org)

### CONTACT MAKE IT OK

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