

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Stigma of mental illnesses decreasing, survey shows

Make It OK and other public awareness campaigns helping to change attitudes

BLOOMINGTON, Minn. — A HealthPartners Institute survey in select Minnesota and Wisconsin communities shows that there has been a decrease in stigma and negative assumptions about mental illnesses. [Make It OK](#), a campaign that encourages people to talk openly about mental illness, has been active in the same communities over the past three to seven years.

It's important to reduce stigma because one in five adults in the U.S. experiences a mental illness in any given year. Stigma is a barrier to getting timely treatment and can lead to isolation for people experiencing mental illness.

HealthPartners evaluators surveyed adults in 2017 and in 2019 in communities that have launched Make It OK campaigns. Results show that there has been a statistically significant decrease in stigma among survey respondents. Statistical significance means that the results are not likely to occur by chance.

The surveys show that from 2017 to 2019:

- More people feel comfortable talking with someone about their mental illness (66% to 71%)
- More people say they would tell friends if they had a mental illness (34% to 41%)
- Fewer people say they would be reluctant to seek help (50% to 46%)

However, stigma is still prevalent and most people believe it is important to reduce it:

- Only about one in four think that people are generally caring and sympathetic to individuals who live with a mental illness (24% to 26%)
- More than nine out of ten said that the Make It OK goal to reduce stigma is important (93% to 95%)

More people are aware of public awareness campaigns to reduce the stigma of mental illness:

- More people are aware of a community campaign to reduce stigma (31% to 35%)

- More people recognize the Make It OK campaign by name (13% to 15%). Awareness is highest in [Red Wing, Minn.](#) (26%) where the campaign has been active for more than five years.

“The survey results show a decrease in stigma and a positive shift in attitudes toward mental illness,” said Marna Canterbury, director of HealthPartners Community Health. “Stigma is still an issue, but the good news is people are willing to take action to help make it ok to talk about mental illness in their communities.”

Make It Ok has been implemented in community-wide campaigns through partnerships in [Goodhue](#) Crow Wing and Dakota counties, [the Duluth area](#), [the St. Croix River Valley](#) and the entire [state of Iowa](#). Since the Make It OK web site began documenting downloads in July 2019, materials have been downloaded by people in more than 150 cities across the U.S. and in New Zealand, Hong Kong and Slovakia.

The award winning podcast [The Hilarious World of Depression](#) is sponsored by Make It OK and HealthPartners. The podcast features conversations with comedians, musicians, and other celebrities who live or have lived with a mental illness. In 2019, the Hilarious World of Depression team launched a new series of interviews called [Tremendous Upside](#). It features athletes who have lived with mental illness.

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About HealthPartners

HealthPartners is the largest consumer-governed, non-profit health care organization in the nation. The company’s mission is to improve health and well-being in partnership with members, patients and the community. For more information, visit healthpartners.com.