

The Nation's Mental Health is Suffering Due to COVID-19

How Can Our Leaders and Partners Help?

Mental health and suicide prevention efforts have never been more critical. We must urgently address the following issues, and others, to ensure equitable access to care and support.



ISSUE

The ability to access evidence-based care for substance use and mental health disorders is a challenge for many people.

CALL TO ACTION

Insurance regulators and Medicaid agencies must enforce the Federal Parity Law, which requires health plans to cover treatment for substance use and mental health disorders no more restrictively than treatment for illnesses of the body.



ISSUE

Telehealth services for substance use and mental health treatment have only been *temporarily* expanded during the pandemic.

CALL TO ACTION

Policymakers and commercial payers must make telehealth *permanently* accessible by enabling telehealth providers to practice across state lines and ensuring full reimbursement.



ISSUE

People experiencing substance use and mental health related crises often end up in the criminal justice system when they reach out for help, instead of getting the care they need and deserve.

CALL TO ACTION

Policymakers must collaborate with the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline to fully implement 988 as a sustainable and coordinated infrastructure for connecting people in crisis with appropriate, non-punitive care.



ISSUE

Black Americans, Latinx Americans, American Indian/Alaskan Natives (AI/AN) and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and questioning (LGBTQ) individuals have been disproportionately impacted by the pandemic.

CALL TO ACTION

Policymakers must advance culturally appropriate and effective suicide prevention, mental health, and substance misuse treatment, education, and services to address systemic inequities.



ISSUE

There is insufficient investment in prevention and early intervention approaches that treat the root causes of suicide and mental health problems in a range of settings.

CALL TO ACTION

Policymakers must fund efforts to improve the nation's collective health in an equitable manner by expanding training for professionals who work with youth in or out of schools, employers, and leaders in communities that have high rates of trauma and mental health problems.



ISSUE

Essential workers and first responders need and deserve increased support both during and after the pandemic.

CALL TO ACTION

Federal agencies, national mental health organizations, public/private partnerships, the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline, and the Crisis Text Line must mobilize to enhance support for essential workers and first responders.

By addressing these issues, and others, our leaders and partners can help the nation emerge from the pandemic more resilient and healthier than before. Just as we have taken actions to reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission, we can also take actions to mitigate behavioral health risks by implementing evidence-based practices and policies and advancing a national conversation.

Explore all of the National Response Calls to Action at www.NationalMentalHealthResponse.org

The National Response is an effort spearheaded by the National Action Alliance for Suicide Prevention.