

Foreword

Mental Health America, its affiliates, and other advocates from around the country have celebrated Mental Health Month every May since 1949. During this month, we reach millions of people with messages and materials of health and hope.

At Mental Health America, we're proud of being the organization that started this tradition. And we're just as proud that it has been embraced so universally.

Every year, we choose a theme for the month. In 2015, we have chosen "B4Stage4" as that theme. Here's why. Mental health concerns are no different from any other physical health concerns. They should be thought about and treated the same way – long before they reach Stage 4.

Mental Health America dedicates itself to mental health. We work for prevention for all; for early identification and intervention for those at risk; for integrated health, behavioral health, and other services for those who need them; and for recovery as a goal.

For too long, mental health issues have not been framed this way. Instead, too many people have been trapped in Stage 4 thinking about them. They wait until after a crisis – until someone is a "danger to themselves or others" – before they act. This is wrong. We don't do this for cancer, heart disease, or diabetes. We shouldn't do this for mental health concerns, either.

So this May, we're asking everyone to help us turn the attention of our nation upstream – before mental health concerns become mental health crises.

That's really what acting before Stage 4 is all about. In our May is Mental Health Month toolkit, we're offering a range of materials, strategies, and resources to bring healthy, B4Stage4 thinking to life. It's all part of keeping the focus of the month on mental health – a time when we dedicate ourselves to protecting our health, to preserving our mental health, and to preventing bad and sometimes tragic outcomes from ever happening again.



Paul Gionfriddo
President & CEO



Introduction

The 2015 May is Mental Health Month Toolkit is designed for MHA Affiliates, advocates, and organizations of all types to raise awareness of the importance of addressing mental health.

By using the toolkit materials, you will help members of your community:

- Understand that it is important to identify and treat mental illnesses early, just as they would with physical illnesses like diabetes or heart disease;
- Learn the risk factors and warning signs for mental illnesses;
- Assess their own mental health through use of MHA's scientifically proven, free, anonymous, and confidential screening tools; and
- Increase understanding of the resources and treatment options available to help people address their mental health.

This year's toolkit includes:

Media Materials

- Key Messages
- Sample Press Release
- Drop-In Article
- Radio PSA Scripts
- May is Mental Health Month Proclamation

Social Media and Web Components

- Sample Facebook and Twitter Posts
- Facebook Cover and Profile Images
- Twitter Header and Profile Images
- B4Stage4 Infographic
- Screening Web Button
- Horizontal Banner Image
- Vertical Banner Image

Items for Advocates

- Tips for Advocates: How to Advance Mental Health B4Stage4
- Sample Letter to Policymakers

Fact Sheets and Handouts

- B4Stage4: Changing the Way We Think About Mental Health
- B4Stage4: Get Informed
- B4Stage4: Get Screened
- B4Stage4: Get Help
- B4Stage4: Where to Get Help (Decision Map)
- May is Mental Health Month Calendar/Poster

Questions?

If you have further questions about Mental Health Month, please contact Danielle Fritze, Director of Public Education at dfritze@mentalhealthamerica.net.