MENTAL HEALTH CHALLENGES IN **RURAL POPULATIONS**



Suicide Rates

In 2013-2015, the suicide rate was 55% higher in rural areas (19.7 per 100,000 population) than in large urban areas (12.7 per 100,000 population).1





Rural people are more likely to report symptoms of psychological distress such as:2







Burnout

Hopelessness

Loss of Self-Esteem

Barriers to Behavioral Health (BH) Care in Rural Areas

ACCESSIBILITY

Rural people should have the same access to BH services (e.g., emergency response, early identification and screening, diagnosis, treatment, and recovery) as those living in urban areas.



Mental Health services are scarce in rural areas due to underfunding of the BH safety net, low salaries, high caseloads, low reimbursement rates, and limited reimbursement for supporting services.



ACCEPTABILITY

The relative lack of anonymity in rural communities discourages individuals from seeking care in specialty settings. Hence, integrating BH services into primary and acute care facilities is critical.



AFFORDABILITY

Rural residents are more likely to be uninsured or underinsured, less likely to be insured through an employer, and more likely to receive Medicaid than are urban residents.



Misconceptions, stereotypes, and prejudices regarding mental health—along with the relative lack each present barriers for seeking care.



If You Or Someone You Know Is In Crisis. Call Or Text 988. The 988 dialing code for the Suicide & Crisis Lifeline is now available in the US for call (multiple languages), or text/chat (English only). You can also reach the Suicide Prevention Hotline/Lifeline at 1-800-273-TALK (8255) or text the Crisis Text Line: 741-741.



Strategies for Success¹

PREVENTION



- Target modifiable risks and protective factors. Adapt to the unique characteristics of each

TREATMENT



- Integrate BH providers (i.e. social workers, psychologists, or counselors) into primary care and acute care settings to address less complex mental health challenges.
- Telehealth and other technologies may help connect rural patients with specialty providers

REGIONALIZATION OF SERVICES



- Local rural providers are dedicated to less complex BH patients.
 Specialty BH providers offer consultative support and access to intensive specialty services).

PLAN FOR SUSTAINABILITY



- Sustainable system of care.
- Avoids unnecessary competition for specialty services that require a larger population base to be viable.

- 1. Gale, J., Janis, J., Coburn, A., & Dorn, Rochford, H. (2019). (rep.). Behavioral Health in Rural America: Challenges and Opportunities. Rural Policy Research Institute. Retrieved April 2022, from https://rupri.org/wp-content/uploads/Behavioral-Health-in-Rural-America-Challenges-and-Opportunities.pdf.
- 2. Younker T, Radunovich HL. Farmer Mental Health Interventions: A Systematic Review. International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health. 2022; 19(1):244. https://doi.org/10.3390/ ijerph19010244

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