

Office of Community Partnerships & Health Equity

A Statewide Perspective of Mental Health Equity in Louisiana before and during the COVID-19 Pandemic: *A Conversation*

Objectives

- ▶ Examine challenges associated with inequities related to mental health that were substantial before the COVID-19 pandemic and that have been amplified
- ▶ Discuss initiatives that are being put into place at the state level to address the mental health inequities
- ▶ Detail of health equity best practice for behavioral health practitioners

Important Definitions

- ▶ Behavioral Health Equity: The right to access quality behavioral health care for all populations regardless of the individual's race, ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, or geographical location.
- ▶ Behavioral Health inequalities: The distribution of social determinants of health, related to behavioral health, between different population groups.
- ▶ Social determinants of health (SDoH): The conditions in which people are born, grow, work, live, and age, and the wider set of forces and systems shaping the conditions of daily life.

Behavioral Health Equity:

Social Determinants of Behavioral Health (SDoBH)

Quality services must be informed by and address *determinants*:

- ▶ Employment
- ▶ Housing stability
- ▶ Insurance status
- ▶ Proximity to services
- ▶ Culturally responsive care
- ▶ Interpersonal, family, and community dynamics
- ▶ Social support,
- ▶ Work and school conditions

Behavioral Health Disparities

- ▶ Rural residents face significant behavioral health disparities compared with their urban counterparts, including higher rates of suicide and depression
- ▶ There are disparities between women and men in regard to risk, prevalence, presentation, course, and treatment of mental disorders
- ▶ Research indicates that American Indian/Alaska Native populations have disproportionately higher rates of mental health problems than the general population
- ▶ Rates of mental illnesses in African Americans are similar with those of the general population. However, disparities exist in regard to mental health care services
- ▶ LGBTQ individuals are more than twice as likely as heterosexual men and women to have a mental health disorder in their lifetime
- ▶ Several cultural and structural barriers prevent Asian Americans/Pacific Islanders from accessing mental health services

Barriers to Care

Factors affecting access to treatment include:

- ▶ Lack of insurance, underinsurance
- ▶ Mental illness stigma, often greater among minority populations
- ▶ Lack of diversity among mental health care providers
- ▶ Lack of culturally competent providers
- ▶ Language barriers
- ▶ Distrust in the health care system
- ▶ Inadequate support for mental health service in safety net settings (uninsured, Medicaid, Health Insurance Coverage other vulnerable patients)



Challenges associated with inequities related to behavioral (mental) health

- ▶ We're already aware of the barriers in play and the social determinants of health impacted by existing inequities.
 - ▶ Add COVID-19 to systemic issues/problems such as barriers to accessibility and availability to/of healthcare; social injustices & racial disparities; economic disadvantages/poverty; housing and shelter instabilities, etc. and you compound large scale issues further.
 - ▶ Research shows that stress is higher in certain groups, and these groups are already impacted in so many other ways.

Challenges associated with inequities related to behavioral (mental) health - *Continued*

- ▶ According to the Stress in America™ 2020 Report, Volume One
 - ▶ <https://www.apa.org/news/press/releases/stress/2020/stress-in-america-covid.pdf>
 - ▶ most recent update, volume three:
<https://www.apa.org/news/press/releases/stress/2020/stress-in-america-covid-july.pdf>


Challenges associated with inequities related to behavioral (mental) health - Continued

- ▶ 90 million American adults are likely experiencing or have experienced specific mental health symptomatology
- ▶ Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, barriers have existed that are identified as negatively impacting the health of individuals, particularly those marginalized groups such as racial and ethnic minority groups or including people of color.
- ▶ People of Color more likely to report higher stress related to COVID-19

Current initiatives that are being put into place at the state level

- ▶ Expansion of evidence-based practices for citizens, especially for the children and youth, and training for behavioral health providers to become certified in specific behavioral health treatments.
- ▶ Expansion of service provision - added telehealth for certain provider types for more accessibility. Of note, during the COVID-19 pandemic additional flexibilities have been granted to the telehealth services so that individuals may obtain treatment and/or continue treatment to support their behavioral health needs.
- ▶ Created a Health Equity Action Team (HEAT) under the guidance of my office.
- ▶ Is currently involved in working with external and internal stakeholders to improve and increase employment access for individuals with behavioral health disorders.

Current initiatives - *Continued*



LOUISIANA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

BEHAVIORAL HEALTH IMMEDIATE RESOURCES

With the recent events of tropical weather systems such as Hurricane Laura and the outbreak of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19), you may be feeling overwhelmed with feelings like fear and anxiety. We are here to help you. These resources provide trained and compassionate individuals to support you during this time. These individuals will provide information and help to link you to mental health and substance use services.

Office of Behavioral Health's Keep Calm Line
1-866-310-7977 | All calls confidential | Available 24/7

Office of Behavioral Health's Behavioral Health Recovery Outreach Line
1-833-333-1132 | All calls confidential | Available 24/7
For healthcare professionals and individuals in recovery

24/7 VIA Link Cope Line
(504) 269-COPE (2763) or 1-800-749-2673 | Available 24/7
Online chat with a counselor between 3 p.m. and 10 p.m. Monday to Friday by going to www.vialink.org and opening the chat box

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline
1-800-273-8255 (veterans press 1)
En Español: 1-888-628-9454
Deaf / hard of hearing: 1-800-799-4889 for TTY
www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org/GetHelp/LifelineChat.aspx

CrisisText Line
Text REACHOUT to 741741 | All calls confidential | Available 24/7

- ▶ Keep Calm
- ▶ Office of Behavioral Health's Behavioral Health Recovery Line (open to all, and especially healthcare professionals and individuals in recovery)
- ▶ Teen Crisis Line - This is not an OBH Line but a line for Teens needing emotional support

HEALTH EQUITY

Health Equity
is when everyone has the opportunity
to be as healthy as possible



Programs

Successful health
equity strategies



Measurement

Data practices to support
the advancement of
health equity



Policy

Laws, regulations, and
rules to improve
population health



Operationalizing Health Equity

- ✓ LDH Professionalism
 - ✓ Improved Services
 - ✓ Improved Health/Health Outcomes



LDH Phase-I Health Equity Plan

- ▶ *Health Equity Action Team*
- ▶ *Data/Needs Assessment: Reporting, Coordination, & Repository*
- ▶ Community Engagement Framework - The Framework
- ▶ Community-Based Participatory Research
- ▶ National Standards for Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Services (CLAS) Standard-Communication and Language Access
- ▶ Inclusion and Diversity Statement/Clause



HEAT Primary Priorities - 95% of the HEAT activity/ies:

- ▶ OPH
- ▶ OAAS
- ▶ OBH
- ▶ OCDD
- ▶ States Facilities
- ▶ Medicaid



Behavioral Health Equity

- ▶ Advancing health equity involves ensuring that everyone has a fair and just opportunity to be as healthy as possible.
- ▶ Integrated healthcare is not the only way to eliminate behavioral health disparities.

Operationalizing Health Equity (HE) Practices

LDH HE Plan

- ▶ Health Equity Action Teams (HEAT)
- ▶ Data/Needs Assessment Repository
- ▶ Community Engagement Framework
- ▶ Community Based Participatory Research
- ▶ Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Services Standards
- ▶ Inclusion and Diversity Statement/Clause

Behavioral Health HE

- ▶ Utilize data to identify, monitor, and respond to behavioral health disparities
- ▶ Expand the behavioral health workforce capacity to improve outreach, engagement, and quality of vulnerable and underserved populations.
- ▶ Promote policy initiatives that strengthen the impact of your programs in advancing behavioral health equity

Operationalizing Health Equity (HE) Practices

Behavioral Health HE

- ▶ Utilizes data to identify, monitor, and respond to behavioral health disparities
- ▶ Expands the behavioral health workforce capacity to improve outreach, engagement, and quality of care for minority and underserved populations.
- ▶ Promotes policy initiatives that strengthen the impact of your programs in advancing behavioral health equity



Your Org.'s Actions

- ▶ Develop a team to execute - on an ongoing basis - to develop an org. *Behavioral Health Disparities Impact (BHDI) Statements (or a pseudo-BHDI statement)*
- ▶ Develop protocols, processes, programming, and services informed by clients SDoBH
- ▶ Identify the critical components of successful integrated health care models for vulnerable groups
- ▶ Focus on leveraging cultural protective factors, provider language fluency, and a trained workforce

