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Survey Finds that Americans Value Mental Health and Physical Health Equally
Mental Health Care Viewed as Inaccessible and Unaffordable by Many

NEW YORK (September 1, 2015) – Nearly 90 percent of Americans value mental health and physical health equally, yet one-third find mental health care inaccessible; and four in 10 see cost as a barrier to treatment for most people, according to a new survey released today by the Anxiety and Depression Association of America, the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention and the National Action Alliance for Suicide Prevention.

Nearly half of people surveyed think they have had a mental health condition (47 percent), yet fewer than two in five have received treatment (38 percent). The survey shows that while people understand pre-existing mental health conditions like depression are risk factors for suicide (86 percent), less than half know that anxiety disorders also put individuals at increased risk.

“There’s a significant body of research that demonstrates that individuals suffering from anxiety disorders and depression face an increased risk for suicidal thoughts and attempts,” said Dr. Mark Pollack, president of the Anxiety and Depression Association of America and Grainger Professor and Chairman, Department of Psychiatry, Rush University Medical Center in Chicago. “Effectively diagnosing and treating both anxiety disorders and depression, especially when they co-occur, are critical pathways to intervening and reducing suicide crises.”

The online survey was conducted on behalf of the three mental health and suicide prevention groups by Harris Poll in August 2015 among more than 2,000 U.S. adults regarding their perceptions about mental health and suicide. Findings include:

- Nearly all respondents think suicide is sometimes or often preventable (94 percent).
- A majority of respondents have been affected by suicide in some way (55 percent).
- Most adults (93 percent) would do something if someone close to them was thinking about suicide.
- While most people (67 percent) said that if they were having thoughts of suicide they would tell someone, men were significantly more likely than women to say they would not tell anyone if they were contemplating suicide.
- More than half (53 percent) did not know that people with anxiety disorders are at risk for suicide, though they were aware that those diagnosed with depression and bipolar disorder are at increased risk.
- Of those who have received treatment for mental health conditions, most thought it was helpful whether it was psychotherapy (82 percent), medication (78 percent) or another form of treatment.

“Progress is being made in how Americans view mental health, and the important role it plays in our everyday lives. People see the connection between mental health and overall well-being, our ability to function at work and at home, and how we view the world around us. I am

encouraged by the survey findings – respondents want to help a loved one by connecting them to the right mental health treatment and support,” said Dr. Christine Moutier, Chief Medical Officer, American Foundation for Suicide Prevention.

The survey identified age and gender trends in mental health and suicide prevention, including:

- **People 54 and younger** are more likely to have received treatment for a mental health condition than those 55 and older.
- **People age 18-34** are more likely to consider it a sign of strength to see a mental health professional, compared with older age groups.
- **Women are more likely than men** to have received mental health treatment and more likely to report experiencing anxiety and depressive disorders while **men are more likely than women** to report substance related conditions.

“The findings provide key insights into how Americans view mental health conditions, life circumstances, barriers for seeking help, and their understanding of the risk factors for suicide,” said Dr. Doryn Chervin, Executive Secretary of the National Action Alliance for Suicide Prevention and Vice President and Senior Scientist at Education Development Center, Inc. “Knowing that the vast majority believe that suicide is preventable helps us to take immediate action. We must continue to support, treat and care for those struggling with mental health conditions and suicidal thoughts by providing affordable, accessible and effective care. It’s all about saving lives.”

The results of the survey are being released during Suicide Prevention Month.

Methodology

The Mental Health and Suicide Survey was conducted online within the United States by Harris Poll on behalf of ADAA, AFSP, and NAASP between August 10-12, 2015 among 2,020 adults ages 18+. Results were weighted for age within gender, region, race/ethnicity, income, and education where necessary to align them with their actual proportions in the population. Propensity score weighting was also used to adjust for respondents’ propensity to be online. The data have been weighted to reflect the composition of U.S. adults. Because the sample is based on those who agreed to participate in the Harris Poll panel, no estimates of theoretical sampling error can be calculated.

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About the Anxiety and Depression Association of America (ADAA)

The [Anxiety and Depression Association of America](#) is the leading nonprofit organization dedicated to the prevention, treatment, and cure of anxiety disorders, depression, bipolar disorder, OCD, and PTSD through education, training, and research. Our mission focuses on improving quality of life for children and adults affected with these disorders. ADAA improves patient outcomes by promoting scientific innovation, encouraging translation and implementation of research into practice, providing continuing education of evidence-based treatments across disciplines and increasing public knowledge about how to find effective treatment.

About the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention:

The [American Foundation for Suicide Prevention](#) leads the fight against suicide. We fund research, offer educational programs, advocate for public policy, and support those affected by suicide. Led by CEO [Robert Gebbia](#) and headquartered in New York, AFSP has 77 local chapters with programs and events nationwide. Review our [Annual Report](#) to learn more about AFSP’s life-saving work. Join the national conversation on suicide prevention by following AFSP on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#), and [YouTube](#).

About the National Action Alliance for Suicide Prevention:

The [National Action Alliance for Suicide Prevention](#) is the public-private partnership working to advance the *National Strategy for Suicide Prevention* and make suicide prevention a national priority. The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, through the Education Development Center, Inc. (EDC) operates the Secretariat for the Action Alliance, which was launched in 2010 by former U.S. Health and Human Services Secretary Kathleen Sebelius and former U.S. Defense Secretary Robert Gates with the goal of saving 20,000 lives in five years.