

PROVIDING CARE FOR THE EMOTIONAL AND MENTAL HEALTH OF RACIAL AND ETHNIC MINORITIES

The Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) identified alarming racial and ethnic disparities in COVID-19 cases and deaths. In Michigan, African Americans make up 14 percent of the population, yet represent 1/3 of positive cases and 40 percent of deaths. Mental health during a crisis does not exist in a vacuum. All these factors can add additional stress during the pandemic. Cultural competence in the delivery of services is essential to the psychological and physical well-being of persons of color. Remember, patients are the owners of their lived experience, and it has value.

ISSUE

Racial and ethnic disparities in behavioral health care persist. Health professionals should tailor the provision of care to remove obstacles that minority patients face in accessing treatment, promote innovative services that respond to patients' needs and preferences, and allow flexibility in evidence-based practice and expanding the workforce.

Racism and discrimination impact mental health. The U.S. has a history with explicit and implicit acts of racism and discrimination towards racial and ethnic minorities. Negative stereotypes about minorities, held explicitly or implicitly by providers, contribute to healthcare disparities.

Improvement in access to services are needed. Numerous studies reveal that racial and ethnic populations often receive different and less optimized management of their health care versus whites. African Americans are significantly less likely than whites to receive guideline-appropriate depression care.

Lack of culturally and linguistically appropriate services (CLAS). Understanding a patient's culture and background can help providers in giving the highest quality of care. CLAS is a way to improve the quality of services provided to all individuals, which will ultimately help reduce health disparities and achieve health equity.

ACTIONS FOR PROVIDERS

- Encourage patients to share their cultural identity.
- Consider culture such as family, kinship, community and spirituality.
- Assess language barriers prior to appointments; provide interpretation, including translating written information.
- Gather information on how traditional beliefs influence expression of mental distress and treatment.
- Examine how perceived racial discrimination contributes to hypervigilance, anxiety or depressive symptoms.
- Take time to review a person's cultural background, considering social and psychological impacts of their culture, community and family connection, immigration status and history, and education.
- Recognize that different cultures may have stigmas about mental illness.
- Incorporate traditional interventions when appropriate. This includes, if indicated, diets, exercises, and other traditional methods used to reduce stress and increase relaxation.
- Address interpersonal trauma histories that might also be a factor in individual well-being.

RESOURCES TO ADDRESS SOCIAL DETERMINANTS OF HEALTH

MENTAL HEALTH

- **For individuals experiencing emotional distress in the context of the COVID-19 crisis**
 - Michigan Stay Well counseling line: 888-535-6136 and press “8.” Free, confidential, available 24/7.
- **For individuals living with persistent mental health conditions**
 - Certified Peer Support Warmline – daily 10 a.m. – 2 p.m. at 888-PEER-753 (888-733-7753)
- **For individuals in crisis, including those considering suicide**
 - National Disaster Distress Helpline: 800-985-5990 or text TalkWithUs to 66746. Free, confidential, 24/7.
 - National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 800-273-8255 or text TALK to 741741. Free, confidential, 24/7.
- **For mindfulness and meditation**
 - Michiganders can access guided meditation and mindfulness exercises. Visit www.Headspace.com/MI.
- **For additional research and resources**
 - a. American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry
 - b. Center for the Study of Traumatic Stress
 - c. American Psychiatric Association
 - d. National Council for Behavioral Health

FOOD ASSISTANCE

- Call 2-1-1 to identify local resources.
 - o Or, look up a [feeding program site](#) or [identify a local foodbank](#).
- Older adults (age 60 and over) are eligible for free home-delivery or pick-up meals during the pandemic.
 - o [Request a meal or friendly wellness-check online](#) or contact the local [area agency on aging](#)
 - o Learn about the [Older Americans Act nutrition programs](#)

HOUSING

Local Housing and Resource Agencies (HARA) assists individuals who are homeless or facing homelessness.

- For individuals who are homeless or facing homelessness, contact the local [Housing and Resource Agency \(HARA\)](#)
- For mortgage and help paying the mortgage/rent – 1-800-569-4287 to speak to a housing counselor.
- For people who are unable to make their monthly mortgage payment due to COVID-19 contact loan servicers for forbearance options.

UNEMPLOYMENT

- People who have lost work or reduced hours due to the pandemic are strongly encouraged to [apply for unemployment benefits online](#) or by calling 866-500-0017. A [fact sheet on how to apply for benefits](#) can answer common questions. The Unemployment Insurance Agency urges Michiganders to file during off-peak hours to avoid longer load times (between 8 p.m. and 8 a.m.). Users are asked to be patient and not click more than once to reload a page.
- *Executive Order 2020-76 (and extended by Executive Order 2020-100) temporarily expands eligibility for unemployment benefits, expanded to self-employed and low-wage workers.*

TRANSPORTATION

Transportation for medical appointments or testing is referred to as Non-Emergency Medical Transportation (NEMT).

- **For Medicaid Beneficiaries**
 - o Beneficiaries with a Medicaid health plan should contact their health plan for transportation.
 - o Beneficiaries without a Medicaid health plan (excluding SE Michigan) should contact their local MDHHS office.
 - o Beneficiaries without a Medicaid health plan who live in SE Michigan should contact LogistiCare Solutions at 866-569-1902.
- **For Individuals with Private Health Insurance**
 - o Contact their health plan to see if they offer NEMT as part of their benefits.
 - o If their health plan does not offer NEMT, contact 2-1-1.
- **For Individuals who are Uninsured**
 - o If someone is uninsured, they should apply for Medicaid to see if they are eligible. If they are not eligible for Medicaid or other insurance, they can go to their local Federally Qualified Health Center (FQHC) to receive services. They may have to pay for these services based on a sliding fee scale, which is based on the patient's income.
- **For Seniors**
 - o If they have a Medicare Advantage (Part C) health plan, contact the health plan to see if they offer NEMT.
 - o Contact the local [area agency on aging](#).

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

- About COVID-19: [Michigan.gov/Coronavirus](https://www.michigan.gov/Coronavirus)
- About mental health and wellness during COVID-19: [Michigan.gov/StayWell](https://www.michigan.gov/StayWell)
- Office of Equity and Minority Health: [Michigan.gov/MinorityHealth](https://www.michigan.gov/MinorityHealth)