Understanding Mental Health Challenges

• A medical condition that disrupts a person's thinking, feeling, mood, ability to relate to others and daily functioning
• Affect every aspect of life
• Can affect persons of any age, race, religion or income
• Not the result of personal weakness, lack of character, or poor upbringing
Understanding Mental Health Challenges

• One in four adults in American experiences a mental health disorder in a given year
  - One in 17 lives with a serious mental health challenge such as schizophrenia, depression or bipolar disorder

• Half of the adults in America will develop a mental health challenge sometime in their lives

• One in 10 children lives with a serious mental or emotional disorder
Understanding Mental Health Challenges

• Symptoms of mental health challenges can appear as physical problems, such as abdominal pain, back pain or headache

• A thorough medical workup is important to understanding the cause and diagnosis of mental health challenges
Serious Mental Health Challenges

• Major depression
  o Mood state that goes well beyond temporarily feeling sad or blue

• Schizophrenia/schizo-affective disorder
  o Affects 2.4 million American adults

• Bipolar disorder
  o Chronic illness with recurring episodes of mania and depression
Serious Mental Health Challenges

• Obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD)
  - Obsessions are intrusive, irrational thoughts, unwanted ideas or impulses

• Anxiety/panic disorder

• Posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD)
  - Affects many different people, from survivors of rape and natural disasters to men and women with military service
Serious Mental Health Challenges

- Borderline personality disorder
  - Pervasive instability in moods, interpersonal relationships, self-image and behavior

- Attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD)
  - Characterized by inattention, hyperactivity and impulsivity

- Dissociative identity disorder
Risk Factors

- Close blood relative with a mental health challenge
- Mother’s exposure to viruses, toxins, drugs or alcohol during pregnancy
- Stressful life situations, such as financial problems, a loved one's death or a divorce
- Chronic medical condition, such as cancer
- Brain damage as a result of a serious injury
Risk Factors

- Traumatic experiences, such as military combat or being assaulted
- Use of illegal drugs
- Being abused or neglected as a child
- Lack of friends or healthy relationships
- Having a previous mental health challenge
Signs and Symptoms

• Feeling sad or down
• Confused thinking or reduced ability to concentrate
• Excessive fears or worries
• Extreme mood changes of highs and lows
• Withdrawal from friends and activities
• Significant tiredness, low energy or problems sleeping
• Delusions, paranoia or hallucinations
Signs and Symptoms

• Inability to cope with daily problems or stress
• Extreme feelings of guilt
• Alcohol or drug abuse
• Major changes in eating habits
• Sex drive changes
• Excessive anger, hostility or violence
• Suicidal thinking
Complications of MH Challenges

• Unhappiness and decreased enjoyment of life
• Family conflicts
• Relationship difficulties
• Social isolation
• Problems with tobacco, alcohol and other drugs
• Problems at work or school
Complications of MH Challenges

- Poverty and homelessness
- Self-harm and harm to others, including suicide or homicide
- Increased risk of motor vehicle accidents
- Weakened immune system
- Heart disease and other medical conditions
Recovery from MH Challenges

- As people become familiar with their illness they recognize their own patterns of behavior
- A holistic process that involves a variety of perspectives
- Recovery journey is unique for each individual
- A process, not an event
- Requires community support and continuity of care
Recovery from MH Challenges

• Seek effective and timely care
  o Because mental health challenges have no cure, treatment may need to be continuous

• Treatment extends beyond medication
  o Includes attaining and maintaining physical health

• Individuals with a mental health challenges benefit tremendously from taking responsibility for their own recovery
Treatment of MH Challenges

• Medications available to help with challenges including psychosis, depression and anxiety
  o Usually effective but side effects should be monitored and minimized

• Treatment program should also include other essential components such as:
  o Psychotherapy
  o Support groups
  o Patient understanding of the challenge
What Can You Do?

• If you have any signs or symptoms of a mental health challenge, see your doctor, mental health provider or other health professional

• If your loved one shows signs of a mental health challenge, have an open and honest discussion with him or her about your concerns
The Treatment Team

• Family or primary care doctor
• Psychiatrist
• Psychotherapist, such as a psychologist or a licensed counselor
• Pharmacist
• Social worker
• Family members/peers
Questions for the Treatment Team

• What mental health challenge might I have?
• Why can't I get over it on my own?
• How do you treat my mental health challenge?
• Will counseling or psychotherapy help?
• Are there medications that might help?
• How long will treatment take?
Questions for the Treatment Team

- What can I do to help myself?
- Do you have any brochures or other printed material that I can have?
- What websites do you recommend?
Dealing With Suicidal Thoughts

• Call 911 or your local emergency number

• Call a suicide hotline number, such as (800) 273-TALK, to reach a trained counselor

• Reach out to a close friend or loved one or a minister or someone in your faith community

• Contact your doctor, other health care provider or mental health specialist
Living Well With MH Challenges

• Stick to your treatment plan
• Avoid alcohol and drug use
• Stay active
• Don't make important decisions when your symptoms are severe
• Prioritize your life
• Learn to adopt a positive attitude