

**BEFORE THE BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
FOR MULTNOMAH COUNTY, OREGON**

PROCLAMATION NO. 2022-042

Proclaiming May 2022 as Mental Health Month in Multnomah County, Oregon.

The Multnomah County Board of Commissioners Finds:

1. Supporting mental health recovery is an essential part of our wellness as a community. All people need and deserve support to achieve their full potential through a health and behavioral healthcare system that is responsive to diverse needs, with equitable services that focus on safety, hope, and recovery, based on a person's individual identity, strengths and goals at every stage of life.
2. People with mental health conditions need to be prioritized, as people with other health conditions are. If you have a heart attack, you expect a certain standard of care in our healthcare system. The same expectations should apply to someone experiencing a mental health challenge or crisis.
3. Throughout the pandemic, people of all ages who had never experienced mental health challenges found themselves struggling. Now, with nearly 1 in 3 people in the U.S. reporting symptoms of depression or anxiety, demand for mental health care has risen. We must reduce the stigma around mental health challenges that commonly shames people into silence and prevents them from seeking help.

Multnomah County has worked to be nimble in responding to the pandemic. Anyone experiencing a mental health crisis needs access to the right services at the right time. We have expanded community services to include street outreach and temporary motel stays with wraparound behavioral health services; we offer mental health education and suicide prevention trainings to better equip community members to recognize developing mental health concerns or crises in those around us, to engage with the person, to connect the person to resources and to act effectively until professional help is available.

And, Multnomah County has increased telehealth support and expanded the role of the Behavioral Health Call Center to make more than 3,000 referrals to Voluntary Isolation Motels for individuals testing positive for COVID, and have processed applications to get more than \$1 Million in financial assistance to Black, Indigenous and other People of Color community members impacted by COVID to cover basic living needs.

4. Black, Indigenous and other People of Color are disproportionately affected by physical and mental health challenges. Lack of access to racially specific treatment and other consequences of current and historical trauma lead to greater complexity in meeting their needs for comprehensive healthcare. Access to high-quality,

individualized services that are racially specific, affordable, and include peer-support are vital to eliminating healthcare disparities. Multnomah County is committed to providing racially specific treatment and supporting culturally specific service providers to increase outreach and better meet the needs of diverse communities.

5. Youth continue to face increasing mental health challenges. Providing school based mental health services – to meet students where they are – is one of the most important things we can do to address this crisis and ensure a healthy and hopeful future for our youth. Prevention and early intervention lessen the severity of mental health conditions and increase the opportunities for recovery, including treatment services that result in better care and better outcomes.
6. People who live with persistent mental health challenges need access to a full continuum of appropriate housing opportunities. HOUSING IS HEALTH. The Behavioral Health Division will continue to collaborate with the Joint Office of Homeless Services on the implementation of the Metro Supportive Housing Services programs, as well as other housing funders and providers to expand affordable housing options for people with mental health needs.
7. Multnomah County is committed to social justice and will continue to collaborate with criminal justice and public safety service providers to identify inequities and prevent or reduce incarceration among people experiencing mental illness. We recognize that many institutions and organizations themselves can cause trauma, and the County will do all it can to ensure that people suffering from mental health challenges do not experience added institutional trauma.
8. Across the County, staff in the Behavioral Health Division and at every level in community based mental health organizations have always said “yes” to meeting the increasing need for mental health care during the pandemic. Despite workforce shortages, many organizations have shown their dedication to the community by expanding beyond their traditional services to include hosting vaccine clinics, and staffing emergency shelters for the most vulnerable individuals in our community. Multnomah County celebrates our mental health treatment heroes.
9. As this two-year wave of pandemic wanes, Multnomah County Behavioral Health turns its focus toward making systemic improvements and becoming better prepared for future healthcare crises, effectively planning for and utilizing funding from the County, State and federal government to address treatment needs, workforce recruitment and retention, and appropriate housing across the continuum of mental health needs. By continuing to work together with all our community partners, including peers and individuals with lived experience, Multnomah County will build an inclusive, healthy community where individuals with mental health challenges are valued and treated with the respect, dignity and compassion to which we all are entitled.

The Multnomah County Board of Commissioners Proclaims:

The month of May 2022 is proclaimed to be Mental Health Month in Multnomah County, Oregon. We invite all residents of Multnomah County to observe this month with a commitment to increasing awareness and understanding of mental health and the steps our citizens can take together to assure mental wellness for all individuals in our community.

ADOPTED this 12th day of May 2022.



BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
FOR MULTNOMAH COUNTY, OREGON

Lori Stegmann, Vice-Chair

REVIEWED:

JENNY M. MADKOUR, COUNTY ATTORNEY
FOR MULTNOMAH COUNTY, OREGON

By _____
Jenny M. Madkour, County Attorney

SUBMITTED BY: Ebony Sloan Clarke, LCSW, MSW, Health Department Director.