

MULTNOMAH COUNTY, OREGON

PROCLAMATION NO. 61

Proclaiming May as Mental Health Awareness Month – **“Belonging is Mental Health: Connection Creates Healing – Access for All.”**

Multnomah County Finds:

- A. Multnomah County observes Mental Health Awareness Month every May. This annual observance seeks to increase awareness about mental health and has been recognized nationally since 1949.
- B. The 2026 theme for Mental Health Awareness Month in Multnomah County is “Belonging is Mental Health: Connection Creates Healing – Access for All,” recognizing that human connection, dignity, and belonging are fundamental to mental health and wellbeing.
- C. Safety and stability in all aspects of life are critical to mental health recovery and overall wellbeing.
- D. Our community continues to recover from the impacts of a global pandemic while also facing a severe housing crisis, both of which create or exacerbate existing mental health conditions and make access to care more complex in an already strained behavioral health system.
- E. Far too often individuals experiencing mental health challenges face barriers to basic needs that should be recognized as human rights, including access to housing, healthcare, food, water, and the basic dignity and respect every person deserves.
- F. Immigrant families in our community are living with heightened fear and uncertainty due to immigration enforcement policies and the threat of family separation, creating profound stress and long-term mental health impacts for parents, children, and entire communities.
- G. Economic instability, job loss, and reductions in public funding for services have increased uncertainty and stress for many residents, making it harder for individuals and families to experience a true sense of safety and belonging.
- H. Communities in Multnomah County continue to confront the devastating impacts of overdose deaths, houselessness, systemic racism, and generational trauma that disproportionately affect Black, Brown, Indigenous, immigrant, and other historically marginalized communities.

- I. Reductions to culturally specific programs and community-based services threaten to undermine decades of progress toward equity, healing, and access to care for communities of color.
- J. People with lived experience of mental health challenges, addiction, and recovery play an essential role in transforming systems of care and uplifting the voices of those who have not yet found theirs.
- K. Recovery is a personal and self-defined journey, and when individuals are supported with compassion, community, and access to care, transformative healing can occur for individuals, families, and entire communities.
- L. Throughout the month of May, community members, organizations, and partners across Multnomah County host events and share messages of hope to highlight the importance of mental health and to remind people that there is hope, treatment is available, and people can and do recover.
- M. Multnomah County's Behavioral Health Division continues to support community awareness and engagement efforts, including traditionally hosting a team at the annual National Alliance on Mental Illness walk in May, and sponsoring a table at this year's event, further demonstrating the County's commitment to mental health awareness and support for our community.

Multnomah County Proclaims:

1. May is Mental Health Awareness Month in Multnomah County, and we call upon residents, organizations, community leaders, and institutions to acknowledge that Belonging is Mental Health, and to commit to creating communities where every person feels valued, safe, connected, and supported.
2. Immigrant families are valued members of our community and deserve safety, dignity, and belonging.
3. Black, Brown, Indigenous, and culturally diverse communities deserve continued investment in culturally specific healing services and programs.
4. Addressing houselessness, overdose, systemic inequities, and trauma requires collective responsibility and community-driven solutions.
5. Mental health services must be accessible, culturally responsive, and rooted in community care.
6. At this critical moment in history, we must choose connection over division, compassion over fear, and community over isolation.

Together we affirm that Belonging is Mental Health, and we commit to building communities where every person can live, heal, and thrive.

Signed this 4th day of May, 2026

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REVIEWED:

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