



Florida Children & Youth Cabinet



Mental Health and Social Stigma in Minority Communities Workgroup

Summary Report

Secretary Simone Marstiller

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Workgroup Members

Secretary Simone Marsteller, Agency for Health Care Administration, Chair

Secretary Shevaun Harris, Department of Children and Families

Belinda Keiser, Vice Chancellor of Keiser University

Surgeon General Scott Rivkees, Department of Health

Dr. Anika Fields, Licensed Psychologist, FAMU

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Workgroup Objectives

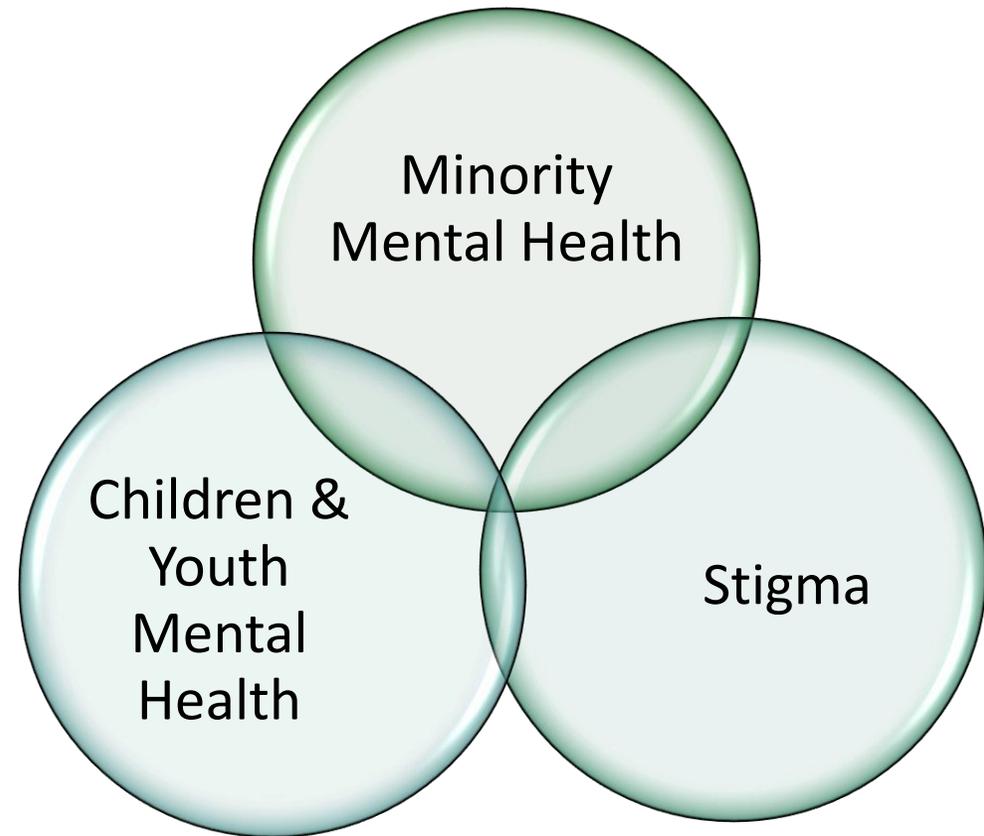
- Normalizing the experience of mental illness/distress for minority communities.
- Educating minority families on effective communication with youth about mental illness/health and treatment.
- Identifying evidence-based communication strategies for normalizing mental illness/distress.
- Ensuring the entire continuum of care addresses normalization of mental illness, from prevention through crisis services.
- Understanding the historical context surrounding the reluctance to seek help among racial and ethnic minority group members.
- Determining what are the barriers to care in addition to stigma.
- Implementing a public health campaign for mental health/suicide prevention targeted to minority communities.

Workgroup Findings

- There is a need in the State of Florida for efforts surrounding:
 1. Education about mental illness and how to communicate within families about mental illness,
 2. Stigma reduction and normalizing mental illness, and
 3. Understanding barriers to care.
- Racial and ethnic minority communities are particularly at risk for mental illness, stigma, and barriers to care and there should be a focus on understanding and addressing these issues within racial and ethnic minority communities.
- Peer support and faith-based communities should be availed in all of these efforts. **Young people prefer peer support.**
- Research suggests that contact-based programs like “Ending the Silence” and “This Is My Brave” are the most effective form of stigma change and should be the focus of stigma reduction efforts in the State of Florida.

Workgroup Recommendations

- The goals and objectives recommended by the Workgroup recognize the intersection between minority mental health, children and youth mental health, and stigma, and are guided by a collective impact approach to social change.
- The Workgroup recommends several short-term goals and objectives that align with a collective impact approach and would allow for immediate benefit to Floridians, including those who are members of minority communities, and children, youth, and families.



Workgroup Recommendations

Short Term

Recommendation 1

With funding available through SAMHSA and the Department of Children and Families, create, brand and implement a statewide media campaign

Recommendation 2

Strengthen efforts to identify and address mental health issues among students through the mental health instruction championed by First Lady Casey DeSantis that is currently required by the Department of Education.

Recommendation 3

Leverage Governor DeSantis' Faith and Community-based Initiative to engage churches in minority communities and create networks whereby families can receive education about mental health and referral to mental health professionals in their communities.

Recommendation 4

Improve Mental Health Professional training related to reluctance of minority community members to engage with care.

Long Term

Recommendation 1

Partner with the University of South Florida (USF) to create a compendium of existing resources for understanding and addressing the social stigma of mental health in minority communities and among children and youth.

Recommendation 2

Develop a targeted strategic plan informed by perspectives from Florida's racial and ethnic minority communities, faith-based communities, and children and youth/families regarding mental illness/health, stigma, mental health treatment, and barriers to care.

Recommendation 3

Engage the state universities, professional licensing boards, and relevant professional associations to provide outreach to minority communities, bringing together mental health professionals and community members in non-clinical settings to raise awareness and lower cultural barriers to seeking help.