

### What is Prejudice and Discrimination?

Prejudice can be defined as a preconceived notion or a learning towards or against someone or something. On the other hand, discrimination refers to action or behavior towards these things and people. *Additionally:*

- Prejudice is baseless and usually associated with negative attitude towards a group.
- Stereotypic beliefs, negative feelings and a tendency to discriminate against members of the group are some of the common characteristics that can be noticed in prejudice.
- Prejudices exist in our minds and are reflected in our speech, comments, actions and behaviors.
- Discrimination can be interpreted as the external representation of prejudice.

### What does Prejudice and Discrimination have to do with Mental Illness?

*They lead to:*

- Fear, mistrust, and violence against youth living with a behavioral health challenge and their families
- A delay or failure to seek help, support and treatment for mental illnesses
- Self-prejudice and self-discrimination

### Discrimination against people who have mental illnesses keeps them from seeking help.

- Twenty percent of children ages 3 to 17 will experience a behavioral health challenge. The Center for Disease Control estimates that just 21% of those children receive treatment – leaving 80% (or approximately 12 million) who do not. Lack of knowledge, fear of disclosure, rejection of friends, and discrimination are a few reasons why children with behavioral health challenges don't access care.
- Without treatment, children with behavioral health challenges are at increased risk of school failure, contact with the criminal justice system, dependence on social services, and even suicide.

### Ways You Can Help Fight Prejudice and Discrimination

- Use respectful language
  - Put the person before the illness – use phrases such as “a person with schizophrenia” rather than a schizophrenic. Never use terms like crazy, lunatic, psycho, retarded and correct people who do so.
  - [Examples of People First Language](#)
- Provide professional development opportunities for staff, regarding diversity, mental health challenges, and fostering an inclusive work environment.
- Include mental illness in discussions about acceptance of diversity, just as you would discuss cultural diversity, religious beliefs, physical disability, and sexual orientation.

### Become an advocate

- Create awareness by informing yourself about mental health.
- Speak out and challenge stereotypes.
- Teach others about mental illness. Spread understanding that they are illnesses like any other.
- Participate in/plan Children's Mental Health Awareness activities in your community or state.
- Participate in/promote the [Green Ribbon Campaign](#) in your community or state.

**Children's Mental Health Matters!**