

Reducing Barriers to Mental Wellness

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- Mental health of population groups with intersecting demographic characteristics
- How the Pandemic exacerbated existing mental health inequities
- Pathways for moving forward



Specific Populations Experiencing Mental Health Inequity

- People with disabilities are highly heterogeneous – in diagnoses, functional capacity, age at onset of disability, visibility of the disability, and so forth.
- Disabled people are also people of different races, ethnicities, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, languages spoken, and socio-economic status.
- Disability prevalence is highest among American Indian/Alaska Native populations, Black and Latino adults with I/DD are more likely to report poor mental health than their white peers, and adults with mobility disabilities who are members of non-white racial/ethnic groups are more likely to experience depression.
- Bisexual, transgender, and gender-nonconforming people also have a higher prevalence of disability than heterosexual cisgender people, and a recent national survey on disability found higher rates of mental and psychiatric disabilities and intellectual and developmental disabilities among LGBTQI+ respondents.
- People who have multiple marginalizing factors in their lives are more likely to experience compounded impacts on their mental and physical health

How the Pandemic Worsened Mental Health Inequity

- Tremendous loss of life within long-term care institutions and among some populations of people with disabilities, such as persons with intellectual and developmental disabilities and people with serious mental health disabilities: for those left behind, and especially those who were seriously ill themselves, there can be [trauma, depression, and “survivor’s guilt.”](#)
- Stress attributable to longtime barriers to education, employment, and housing faced by people with intellectual and developmental (I/DD) were joined by disparately high rates of COVID-19 infection and death impacting disability communities and peers.
- 2021 data showed that household internet access and telehealth use was across the board for disabled people of color, across all age ranges
- People who have multiple marginalizing factors in their lives are more likely to experience compounded impacts on their mental and physical health

Innovative Pathways to Explore

Behavioral Health Peer Supports

- Independent Living Model
- Consider ways to support quality, career pathways, capacity to work on social determinants of health, and address equity
- National or cross-state accreditation

Community-Based Mental Health Crises Units

- Enables person to remain within family and cultural support network
- Most integrated setting: Section 504, Americans with Disabilities act, Section 1557

Provider Training in Treating People with Intellectual/Developmental Disabilities

- Develop curriculum & competencies for people with I/DD & mental health needs

TA on and Enforcement of Communication Accessibility in Telehealth

- Incentivize & ensure that this treatment lifeline is usable for **all** people

Thank You!

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