

THE CHANGING WORLD OF *mental health*

The world has changed in many ways over the past few years, and a big area that we have seen this change is in the world of mental health. According to Mental Health America, the percentage of adults who are experiencing mental health issues increased from 18.07% in 2019 to 19.86% in 2022¹. The number of adults that experienced serious suicidal ideation jumped from 9.8 million in 2019 to over 11.4 million in 2022.

Not only are we noticing increases in mental health concerns in adult populations, but we are seeing an increase in mental health issues in youth as well. Since 2019, the amount of youth that experienced at least one depressive episode increased from 12.63% to 15.08% (*Mental Health in America, 2022*). These are some alarming statistics! Dealing with any mental health concern can have a variety of impacts: relationships, work, school, physical health, etc. Systemically, where we see an impact is an increase in wait times for mental health services.

Though the rate of mental health providers is increasing, unfortunately, it is not increasing at the same rate as the need or mental health services. On one hand, we are seeing a reduction in the stigma surrounding mental health and more folks are seeking treatment, on the other hand,



this has created challenges because there aren't enough providers to meet the current demand.

According to the National Council for Mental Wellbeing², the national average wait time for behavioral health services is 48 days (National Council on Mental Wellbeing, 2022). Here are some things you can do to increase your chance of being seen sooner:

- **Call sooner rather than later.** If possible, don't wait until you are experiencing a mental health crisis to call and schedule an appointment.
- **Try telehealth/virtual options.** Many providers can get folks in sooner if they are open to telehealth.
- **Ask if the provider has a waitlist that you can be put on.** Some providers have a waitlist in case anything opens sooner in their schedule.

In the meantime, what do I do while I am waiting to be seen?

- If you are experiencing a crisis, **call 988.**
- **Reach out for support**—friends, family, co-worker, support group. Engage your support network.
- **Come up with a self-care plan.** Make a list of things you can do to take care of yourself.
- **Schedule an appointment** with your primary care doctor to discuss your symptoms.

As we look at the trends, it reinforces just how important it is to take care of our mental health. So if you need help, ASK, because you deserve to get the help you need!

¹Mental Health in America. (2022). *The State of Mental Health in America*. Mental Health in America.

²National Council on Mental Wellbeing. (2022). *2022 CCBHC Impact Report*. National Council on Mental Wellbeing.