

MENTAL HEALTH COMMUNITY NEEDS SURVEY

RESULTS SUMMARY

We'd like to sincerely thank the community for their participation in our 2023/2024 Mental Health Community Needs Survey. Eliminating stigma and improving access to care are central to our mission of improving the well-being of those living with mental illness and mental health concerns in Michiana. Hearing directly from the community helps affirm our mission and guides our strategy - continue reading for our findings and action plan.

COMMUNITY REPRESENTATION

We are delighted that over 150 community members completed the survey, almost twice the number than completed the last community needs survey in 2021/2022. Respondents were a mix of individuals with lived experience, family members, caregivers, providers, community members, and advocates. Survey respondents reflect a wide swath of Michiana:

- 67.3% from St. Joseph County
- 19.9% from Elkhart County
- 1.28% from Marshall County
- remaining 11.52% were from surrounding counties

BARRIERS TO CARE

The top 3 significant barriers to care were identified as being:

- financial (76%)
- not enough mental health providers (73%)
- logistical concerns (69%)

ADVOCACY NEEDS

The following needs were identified as being crucial to improving mental health in Michiana:

- Increasing access to providers and mental health services (28%)

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- Development of specialized services, including addiction services (11.2%)
- Greater representation for marginalized groups, including increasing the number of BIPOC providers (10.8%)
- More affordable services (9.3%)
- Eliminating stigma (8.7%)

Development of specialized services and greater representation for marginalized communities were not mentioned in the 2021 surveys, but were the second and third most-answered responses in 2024, a welcome change.

Respondents described seeing the following advocacy work being done in the community:

- Education (68%)
- Community organizing (44%)
- Advocacy for new programs (38%)
- Community coalitions (37%)
- Increased funding (20%)
- Policy changes (15%)

Respondents identified 64 organizations or individuals doing advocacy work in Michiana. Oaklawn was identified most often followed by MHAM. Large public mental health organizations, smaller community organizations, private practice groups, individuals in the community, as well as some coalitions were also identified. By contrast, in 2021, only 38 organizations/individuals were identified.

MHAM'S COMMUNITY FOCUS

The mission of MHAM is to improve the quality of life for those living with mental illness & mental health concerns in Michiana through initiatives that eliminate stigma, build collaboration, and improve access to care, especially for those who have been historically marginalized - and our programming reflects that community commitment. What MHAM is prepared to do:

Remove barriers to care

The Pro Bono Counseling Project serves Michiana community members who are uninsured, underinsured, or without financial resources to pay for counseling services. This short term

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counseling program provides up to 12 free counseling sessions through volunteer licensed clinicians and interns.

Peer Support Services provide extra support and referrals to individuals who may not be ready for counseling services or may need additional referral assistance.

Referral assistance is provided to anyone who is struggling to navigate the mental health system or who is better served through another provider.

Reduce Stigma

Free classes are offered to the community that increase mental health literacy. Understanding Mental Health, Mental Health and Relationships, Navigating the Mental Health System and Reducing Stigma are offered in English and Spanish to Youth and Adults in the community.

Public Events are planned throughout the year that highlight significant mental health issues and educate the community about local resources.

Building the mental health workforce

Since our move to One Roof Southeast, we have begun to do our part to increase the mental health workforce. Master's level internships and training opportunities for early career professionals in a maternal mental health specialization are now available.

Provider education classes offer low cost offerings to increase effectiveness and culturally responsive care.

Sustainable, long term solutions to the workforce shortage will take time to develop. Multiple systems need to participate in creative problem solving and incentivizing careers in social work and mental health counseling. Affordable insurance that provides more mental health coverage is key. Community access or embedded mental health providers will help meet some of the community needs.

In short, the work that we're doing at Mental Health Awareness of Michiana is proving to be a sorely needed resource in the community, and - bolstered by this community data - we look forward to pushing the importance of accessibility & equity in mental health care in Michiana by eliminating stigma, building collaboration, and improving access to care.