



# MEDIA RELEASE

STATE OF TENNESSEE  
DEPARTMENT OF MENTAL HEALTH &  
DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
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## MAY IS MENTAL HEALTH MONTH

**NASHVILLE** – In recognition of Mental Health Month, the Tennessee Department of Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities is encouraging Tennesseans to increase their awareness of mental health and mental illness. Mental health is fundamental to the achievement of overall health, but the stigma about persons with mental illness can be a destructive and difficult obstacle.

Mental health is important for everyone. Successful performance of mental functions results in productive activities, fulfilling relationships with others, and the ability to adapt to change and to successfully cope with adversity. Mental health is essential to overall health and indispensable to lifelong personal well being.

“Mental disorders are highly prevalent in our society and seriously affect families and communities,” said TDMHDD Commissioner Virginia Trotter Betts. “Mental illnesses are real illnesses for which there are treatments and solutions. Mental illnesses are just as diagnosable and just as successfully treatable as other physical illnesses.”

Mental illness is a health condition that is characterized by alterations in thinking, mood, or behavior mediated by the brain that results in impaired functioning/ways of talking, feeling, and acting. Yet, many individuals living with a mental disorder do not seek care because of the stigma surrounding mental illness. Stigma allows us to blame or shame persons with these disorders and is the single greatest barrier to people getting the treatment they need.

“The greatest weapon against stigma is knowledge. As a society, we must accept mental illnesses as real and mental health treatment as effective,” said Betts. “We hope with the many activities and information available for the public during Mental Health Month, Tennesseans will learn more about mental health and mental illness. We must enhance community understanding and empower those who are especially vulnerable in these stressful times to seek help.”

For a complete listing of Mental Health Month activities please visit [www.tn.gov/mental](http://www.tn.gov/mental) or call TDMHDD's Office of Communications at (615) 253-4812.

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