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Contact: **Adreanne Waller**, MPH, Senior Health Analyst, Washtenaw County Public Health Department
E-mail: waller@ewashtenaw.org
Phone: (734) 544-3057

Gray R. Reynolds, Communications Manager, Washtenaw County Public Health Department
E-mail: reynoldsg@ewashtenaw.org
Phone: (734) 544-3091

**COUNTYWIDE HEALTH ASSESSMENT SUPPORTS NATIONAL DATA:
AT LEAST 21% OF ADULT COUNTY POPULATION HAS ONE OR MORE
DIAGNOSABLE MENTAL DISORDERS IN A GIVEN YEAR**

**Mental Illness More Prevalent than Physical Diseases for 42,000 Washtenaw Adults;
Risk Factors, Stigma and Lack of Awareness Create Significant Cost to County**

YPSILANTI, Mich., February 27, 2007—Washtenaw County Public Health Department officials today released the results of a comprehensive survey of mental health indicators for Washtenaw County residents. The report, *Mind Matters: A Public Health Approach to Mental Health and Well-Being*, provides countywide data about the prevalence of mental illness in adults, children and special populations. The report supports national estimates from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, the National Institute of Mental Health, and the World Health Organization that suggest at least one in five Washtenaw County residents will suffer from a diagnosable mental disorder at some point during any given year. These episodes are typically short-term events, involving an anxiety or mood disorder, that can be alleviated with effective treatment. The *Mind Matters* report also confirmed that poor mental health is associated with increased risk behaviors such as substance abuse, tobacco use, and physical inactivity.

The National Institute for Mental Health estimates the economic impact of adult depression at \$83 billion per year in lost productivity. In cases of major depression, health-related and work-related costs are estimated at \$6,000 per worker, with employers bearing \$4,200 per worker of this amount.

Fax: (734) 544-6706
Communicable Disease

Fax: (734) 544-6704
Administration

Fax: (734) 544-6705
Public Health

HEARING IMPAIRED: (734) 994-1733

WEB ADDRESSES: <http://www.ewashtenaw.org>

<http://publichealth.ewashtenaw.org>



Primary, behavioral, and public health care providers face significant challenges in treating mental health with the same urgency as physical health, the report indicates. These challenges include the lack of adequate insurance coverage needed for prevention and treatment, the absence of reliable systems to detect and determine the needs of those with critical mental health challenges, and the stigma associated with mental illness.

Key findings from the *Mind Matters* report (available online at <http://publichealth.ewashtenaw.org>) include:

Adults

- At least 21% of Washtenaw County adult residents age 18-54 (approximately 42,000 individuals) had one or more diagnosable mental disorders in any given year. Even more recent national data from Dr. Ronald C. Kessler of Harvard University (formerly of the University of Michigan) suggests that closer to 26% of the population experience a diagnosable mental disorder during any given year.
- The prevalence of anxiety and mood disorders, including depression, are similar to or higher than those of chronic physical diseases such as coronary heart disease, cancer, diabetes and asthma—nationally and countywide. According to the U.S. Population Bureau, depression is now the leading cause of disability worldwide and the fourth-leading cause of global disease burden.
- 10% of Washtenaw County residents reported at least a third of their past month spent in poor mental health. These same individuals reported significantly higher levels of daily limitations than those who reported fewer poor mental health days. They also experienced higher rates of diabetes, asthma, high cholesterol, intimate partner violence, physical inactivity, tobacco use, binge drinking, and lack of health insurance, than those county residents who reported greater contentment. Of these individuals, only 24% are currently being seen by a mental health professional. Of those who reported they spent all of their past month in poor mental health, only 29% are being seen.

Children & Students

- 21% of Washtenaw County children age 9-17 (7,307 children) are estimated to have one or more mental disorders with at least mild functional impairment.
- 10% of children (4,823) received special educational services because of mental, emotional, or cognitive disabilities.
- 15% of University of Michigan students reported being diagnosed with depression.

Special Populations

- The Washtenaw County Jail Diversion Program reported that 27% of Washtenaw County jail inmates use psychotropic medications.
- Approximately 1/3-to-1/2 of the 2,700 homeless persons in Washtenaw County suffer from mental illness.

“Although this is a critical health issue similar to heart disease, cancer or stroke, the stigma attached to mental illness makes it a sensitive topic to discuss,” said Ellen Clement, Health Officer for the Washtenaw County Public Health Department. “The *Mind Matters* report underscores the prevalence of mental disorders in our own county and speaks to the need for a proactive, prevention-oriented approach,” she said. “For the county to be successful, we need to focus on identifying risk factors, increasing awareness about mental disorders and the effectiveness of treatment, and removing the stigma associated with receiving treatment. It also requires that we reduce health disparities and improve access to mental health services, particularly among populations that are disproportionately affected,” Clement continued. “It is my hope that the data in this report will enable policymakers and local health care providers to make more informed decisions about at-risk populations and early prevention and treatment needs. This is a problem that can no longer be overlooked—eventually, it will touch each of our lives,” she concluded.

Lead author of the report, Washtenaw County Public Health Department Senior Health Analyst Adreanne Waller, MPH, said the report is unique in that mental health and illness are not traditionally examined in the same way communicable or chronic physical diseases are. “This report not only covers illness, but also presents information regarding early risk and protective factors such as the proportion of the population with adequate sleep, life satisfaction, and emotional and social support,” she said. “Protective factors for children include resiliency and access to reliable adults for homework and moral support. These factors are absolutely essential to the well-being of children.”

The *Mind Matters* report includes data from the most recent Washtenaw County Health Improvement Plan (HIP) telephone survey of over 2000 Washtenaw County households. To learn more about HIP survey results, progress toward health improvement goals over the last 10-year measurement period (1995-2005), and other local community health efforts, community members are invited to visit <http://hip.ewashtenaw.org>, or attend HIP poster sessions and presentations that will be held around Washtenaw County during the winter of 2006-7. All scheduled activities will be posted at <http://hip.ewashtenaw.org>.

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