



Mental Health Awareness Month is ending, but the work continues

BY APRYL MARIE FOGEL ON MAY 30, 2018

ATBLOG SLIDER

For those of you who didn't know, May is **Mental Health Awareness Month**. As the month winds down, I'd be remiss not to post about Mental Health Awareness, and how much better we need to do around the nation with education, destigmatization and prioritizing access to affordable mental healthcare.

Too often the only time we see people talk about mental health awareness, or mental health in general, is when tragedies such as public violent acts occur (though it's a misconception that those suffering from mental illness are inevitably going to be violent) or with the suicides of celebrities. Meanwhile, millions all around us are suffering daily.

In addition to those who suffer from mental health illness, families are being broken apart and employers are losing productivity, students are failing... there is such a high cost for what has been historically our nation's inability to recognize and address the mental health crises.

The cost of ignoring the problem is so much more significant.

Before Mental Health Awareness Month ends, I want to encourage you, the readers of Alabama Today, to get more facts, become more educated and talk about mental health with those around you much more frequently. We don't need to wait for a crises to strike to address what we can and should be doing.

Encourage your lawmakers to adequately fund mental health. Talk to your teachers, educators, school administrators about what they are doing in schools to recognize and possibly intervene with students who may need additional help.

People with severe, persistent mental illness can, and do, live active, vibrant lives. They can be, and often are, productive members of our society. Those who often go untreated generally fair far, far worse. We need to do better by acknowledging and educating those around us about the issues.

Here are some state and national resources below about mental health:

- **NAMI Alabama:** The mission statement/purpose of NAMI Alabama is to provide support, education, and advocacy for persons with mental illnesses, their families, and others whose lives are affected by these brain disorders. This is accomplished by:
 - Educating the people of Alabama about mental illness thereby reducing stigma
 - Providing support for individuals with mental illness to grow and contribute to their community
 - Developing, nurturing and coordinating a statewide network of local affiliates
 - Promoting public policies which expand services and improve treatment for all persons living with a mental illness and supporting research leading to the control and management of mental illness
- **Alabama Department of Mental Health:** The state agency tasked with, "Promoting the health and well-

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Judge Wes Alier: Mental health is vital part of overall health
May is Mental Health Awareness Month. Mental health is a vital part of overall health. As Probate Judge of Pike County I interact weekly with families, various agencies, May 21, 2015
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