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Birmingham group works to eliminate mental health stigma

Published: Wednesday, April 4th 2018, 8:46 pm CDT

Updated: Wednesday, April 4th 2018, 8:50 pm CDT

By Catherine Patterson, Anchor [CONNECT](#)

BIRMINGHAM, AL (WBRC) - One organization is tackling a tough but necessary topic: suicide.

On Thursday, "Brother Let's Talk" will hold a discussion at UAB.

It's goal is to get students, particularly African American men, to realize it's okay to seek help.

It's something many people are uncomfortable talking about.

"Particularly within the African-American community, there has been a stigma that exists around getting support around mental health, particularly with black men," said UAB Student Multicultural and Diversity Program Director Christopher Jones.

He said the daily stress of a college student's life combined with the issues and perceptions of African American men can be challenging.

"Often times they don't know who do talk to," said Jones.

That's where Brother Let's Talk comes in.

"The whole goal is to stop the stigma and address the stress," said Brother Let's Talk Logistics Coordinator Yvas Witherspoon. "So 'Brother Let's Talk' consists of an African American psychiatrist, psychologist, licensed professional counselor, and a domestic violence/substance abuse counselor."

She said suicides are increasing.

According to Jefferson County's Annual Coroner Report, the number of suicides increased from 76 in 2016 to 107 in 2017.

"It's happening too often," she said.

In an effort to combat that number from increasing, and to diminish the stigma, 'Brother Let's Talk' is partnering with UAB to hold a discussion.


"Creating an environment where they feel comfortable expressing themselves, and feel comfortable talking about their challenges, and feel comfortable feeling vulnerable. That is a really tough thing for a lot of black men to do," said Jones. "It's okay to say I'm hurt, or I'm in despair, or I need help."

Jones said the use of the university's mental health services has increased drastically and he thinks it's because people are finally talking about it.

The discussion will be held Thursday at UAB Hill Student Center Room 318 from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m.

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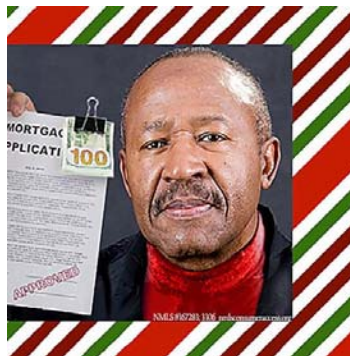
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