



BOB RILEY
GOVERNOR

STATE OF ALABAMA
DEPARTMENT OF MENTAL HEALTH
RSA UNION BUILDING
100 N. UNION STREET
POST OFFICE BOX 301410
MONTGOMERY, ALABAMA 36130-1410



JOHN M. HOUSTON
COMMISSIONER

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Contact: Office of Public Relations
334.242.3417

ADMH CELEBRATES MENTAL ILLNESS AWARENESS WEEK

MONTGOMERY - About 60 million Americans experience mental health problems in any given year. Yet the stigma associated with mental illness keeps some from getting help when they need it. The U.S. Congress declared the first week in October as National Mental Illness Awareness Week and it has been celebrated as such since 1990. The National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) has promoted Mental Illness Awareness Week as a platform to sponsor public education efforts and events. The theme of this year's Mental Illness Awareness Week is "Building Community. Taking Action.", and is being observed October 4-10, 2009.

Mental illnesses are medical illnesses that can profoundly disrupt a person's thinking, feeling, mood and ability to relate to others. The most common forms of mental illness are bipolar disorder, schizophrenia, major depression, obsessive-compulsive disorder, and a broad range of anxiety disorders. In Alabama, the Department of Mental Health serves more than 100,000 citizens with mental illnesses each year. More than 98% of those individuals are experiencing recovery and living in the community.

Mental illnesses can affect persons of any age, race, religion, or socioeconomic status. With appropriate treatment most people with mental illnesses can lead productive, fulfilling lives. According to the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH), treatments for serious mental illnesses today are highly effective; between 70 and 90 percent of individuals have significant reduction of symptoms and improved quality of life.

With respect to the National Mental Illness Awareness Week, The Alabama Department of Mental Health encourages the public to take the opportunity to learn more about mental illnesses and to reflect on the hope and real possibility of recovery. ADMH Commissioner John Houston said, "Knowing and understanding the facts can help people with symptoms of mental illness seek treatment, as well as help alleviate the stigma attached with having a mental illness."

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RESOURCES

For more information on NAMI and Mental Illness Awareness Week, visit www.nami.org.

Information on mental illness services in the state of Alabama can be obtained by contacting the ADMH Mental Illness Division at (334)242-3642 or by visiting us online at www.mh.alabama.gov.