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Alabama celebrates Prevention Week

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By Annie Hubbell - bio | email

(WTVM) - In a typical month, approximately 5.3 million Americans use a prescription pain reliever for non-medical reasons.

This is the type of statistic people around the nation, including the state of Alabama, are trying to bring awareness to during May's Prevention Week.

"Approximately one out of ten people are treated for some kind of emotional or mental illness each year so it's very important that people look how they are living their lives," explains Deborah Owen, Director of the Department of Psychiatric Medicine at the East Alabama Medical Center.

Governor Robert Bentley recently proclaimed this week, May 12-18, as Prevention Week in Alabama, coinciding with the National Prevention Week observance.

It serves to promote prevention efforts and provide education about behavioral health.

This year's theme, "Your Voice, Your Choice" emphasizes that the prevention of substance abuse and promotion of mental health starts with the choices people make in their own lives.

"For prevention, one of the things to remember is that mental health is a lot like your physical health and if you maintain balance between your work, play, your family life, your professional life and you eat, exercise and rest well your likelihood of developing mental illness becomes low," says Owen.

Each day this week will highlight a different theme including Prevention of Prescription Drug Abuse & Illicit Drug Use and Promotion of Mental, Emotional & Behavioral Well Being.

If it is believed that you or a loved one is suffering from a mental health problem, Owen says the first step is to consult your doctor.

"Start by talking to you family physician, there are so many counselors in the local area as well as East Alabama Mental Health. Those are all starting points. If your family physician felt like you could benefit from medicine, he or she could refer you to a psychiatrist."

The Alabama Department of Public Health is encouraging Alabamians to visit their [Facebook page](#) and take the "Prevention Pledge," which inspires people to commit to a healthy lifestyle free of substance abuse and help raise awareness.

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