

What is Prejudice and Discrimination?

Prejudice can be defined as a preconceived notion or a leaning towards or against someone or something. On the other hand, discrimination refers to action or behavior towards these things and people. *Additionally:*

- Prejudice is baseless and usually associated with negative attitude towards a group.
- Stereotypic beliefs, negative feelings and a tendency to discriminate against members of the group are some of the common characteristics that can be noticed in prejudice.
- Prejudices exist in our minds and are reflected in our speech, comments, actions and behaviors.
- Discrimination can be interpreted as the external representation of prejudice.

What does Prejudice and Discrimination have to do with Mental Illness?

They lead to:

- Fear, mistrust, and violence against youth living with a behavioral health challenge and their families
- A delay or failure to seek help, support and treatment for mental illnesses
- Self-prejudice and self-discrimination

Discrimination against people who have mental illnesses keeps them from seeking help.

- Twenty percent of children ages 3 to 17 will experience a behavioral health challenge. The Center for Disease Control estimates that just 21% of those children receive treatment – leaving 80% (or approximately 12 million) who do not. Lack of knowledge, fear of disclosure, rejection of friends, and discrimination are a few reasons why children with behavioral health challenges don't access care.
- Without treatment, children with behavioral health challenges are at increased risk of school failure, contact with the criminal justice system, dependence on social services, and even suicide.

Ways You Can Help Fight Prejudice and Discrimination

- Use respectful language
 - Put the person before the illness – use phrases such as “a person with schizophrenia” rather than a schizophrenic. Never use terms like crazy, lunatic, psycho, retarded and correct people who do so.
 - [Examples of People First Language](#)
- Provide professional development opportunities for staff, regarding diversity, mental health challenges, and fostering an inclusive work environment.
- Include mental illness in discussions about acceptance of diversity, just as you would discuss cultural diversity, religious beliefs, physical disability, and sexual orientation.

Become an advocate

- Create awareness by informing yourself about mental health.
- Speak out and challenge stereotypes.
- Teach others about mental illness. Spread understanding that they are illnesses like any other.
- Participate in/plan Children's Mental Health Awareness activities in your community or state.
- Participate in/promote the [Green Ribbon Campaign](#) in your community or state.

Children's Mental Health Matters!