

Rural Lifestyle Can Present Barriers to Seeking Help for Mental Illness



For many people living in rural America, the stigma surrounding mental illness can be a major barrier to seeking help. Although mental health is an important part of overall health, it is often not recognized as a valid health issue. A mental illness may be perceived as a character flaw or personal weakness. This type of thinking may be more common among rural residents.

Overcoming the Barriers

Understanding that mental illness is a disease – just like cancer or diabetes – is one step towards overcoming the rural lifestyle challenges to seeking help.

In addition, talking openly about one's own experiences with mental health conditions, as well as providing support to others who are struggling, are key to breaking down the mental health stigma that often stands in the way of people seeking treatment.

Other aspects of a rural lifestyle that can be barriers to seeking help for mental illness include:



Lack of medical insurance to cover mental healthcare.



Fears of being considered weak or a failure.



Lack of trust to maintain confidentiality in a small, close-knit community.



Not wanting to ask for help having been taught that self-reliance is a virtue.



Limited access to telehealth appointments with mental healthcare providers because many rural homes don't have reliable internet.



Stress factors that are unique to rural life, including a weakening agricultural economy, lack of consistent income, and a solitary lifestyle.

For mental health and suicide prevention information and resources, visit the **Rural Mental Health Resilience Program** website at

www.RuralMinds.org/resilience



Help is available

If you or someone you know is in crisis and needs help, call or text 988. The 988 Lifeline connects you with a trained crisis counselor who can help. It is free, confidential, and available 24/7. If this is a life-threatening emergency, call 911 or go to the nearest hospital emergency room.