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.

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

- Not wanting to ask for help having been taught that self-reliance is a virtue
- Fear of being considered weak or a failure
- Lack of trust to maintain confidentiality in a small, close-knit community
- Lack of medical insurance to cover mental healthcare
- Limited access to telehealth appointments with mental healthcare providers because many rural homes don’t have reliable internet service
- Stress factors that are unique to rural life, including a weakening agricultural economy, lack of consistent income, and a solitary lifestyle.

In crisis? Call or text 988

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.

For mental health and suicide prevention information and resources, visit the Rural Mental Health Resilience Program website at www.RuralMinds.org/resilience or via the QR code below:

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