



# Raising awareness and breaking the silence surrounding minority mental health

Filed in [Benefits](#), [Health and Retirement Benefits](#), [Equity and inclusion](#) • By: [Lisa M. Gomez](#) • July 30, 2024



This National Minority Mental Health Awareness Month, our Employee Benefits Security Administration (EBSA) is raising awareness of protections for job-based mental health and substance use disorder benefits and encouraging everyone, particularly those in underserved communities, to break the silence and stop the stigma when they need help.

Mental health affects all of us. While *reported* mental illness is lower among Latino, Black and Asian adults compared to white adults, research suggests mental illness may be underdiagnosed and underreported among people of color. Studies have found that racial disparities in access to health care and the absence of culturally-informed survey and screening tools may contribute to these lower rates.

In some minority communities, talking about mental health struggles can be considered a taboo topic or a sign of weakness. Some may feel that mental health struggles are a source of shame, which can be a barrier to seeking mental health care. But acknowledging what you are experiencing and asking for help is a sign of strength. Your feelings are valid and do not need to be kept secret.

EBSA is actively working to implement President Biden's Executive Order 13985, "Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government," with outreach and education focusing on increasing awareness in underserved communities about protections for job-based mental health and substance use disorder benefits to help in accessing needed services.

We've been updating our publications and other resources to make them available in other languages. We've worked to increase the number of bilingual/multilingual EBSA Benefits Advisors in our regional offices across the country so that we can best serve all workers and their families. And we've been focused in our outreach, education and assistance efforts to connect with members of underserved communities, by speaking with media

outlets that specifically serve those communities to get our message out and increase awareness about EBSA and the services we provide, as well as planning outreach events in underserved communities.

Mental health is part of your overall physical health. Seeking professional help for mental health issues is difficult for many people, but taking care of your mental health will allow you to take better care of your family. It also helps you serve as an example to those around you to normalize conversations and reduce the stigma about mental health issues. It shouldn't be any different to talk about living with heart disease or diabetes than it is to talk about living with depression or an eating disorder.

Follow these steps to get started:

1. **Learn about your mental health benefits.** Your job-based health plan may cover mental health and substance use disorder services such as counseling, therapy and screenings for anxiety. Find out what your plan covers and what treatments or medications will cost by obtaining a copy of your health plan documents. Contact your health plan administrator and request copies of your plan's Summary Plan Description and/or your Summary of Benefits and Coverage. Check out EBSA's publication, "[Top 10 Ways to Make Your Health Benefits Work for You](#)," to learn how to take advantage of your job-based plan.
2. **Use your benefits.** Federal mental health parity laws generally require that mental health and substance use disorder benefits are offered in a similar way to medical and surgical benefits. When seeking treatment for mental health issues, you shouldn't face barriers or additional restrictions that don't exist for medical and surgical benefits. To learn more, read our publication "[Understanding Your Mental Health and Substance Use Disorder Benefits](#)."
3. **Contact EBSA for help.** If you have questions or need help requesting your health plan documents, contact EBSA. EBSA has benefits advisors to help you understand your job-based health plan benefits and how to use them. **Our assistance is free, confidential and available in over 105 languages.** [You can contact us online at \[askebsa.dol.gov\]\(https://askebsa.dol.gov\)](#) or by calling 1-866-444-3272.

[You can download these and other mental health publications in 13 languages on our website.](#)

As we observe National Minority Mental Health Awareness Month, we encourage you to take care of your mental health by using your job-based mental health and substance use disorder benefits. Help us share this important information with your family, your coworkers and your community so everyone can feel empowered and not let stigma prevent them from getting needed mental health services. And we encourage everyone to share your stories about living with mental health and substance use disorders and what you have done to take care of yourself. Increasing openness about mental health can help stop the stigma – you never know whose life you may change, or save, simply by telling your own story in a way that helps them feel they are not alone.

*Lisa M. Gomez is the assistant secretary for the department's Employee Benefits Security Administration.*

**Tags:** [EBSA](#), [Employee Benefits Security Administration \(EBSA\)](#), [Employee Benefits Security Administration](#), [Minority Mental Health Awareness Month](#), [mental health](#), [mental health at work](#)

SHARE THIS:

[Entrepreneurship Among Disabled People by Industry and Age](#)

[Entrepreneurship Among Disabled People by Industry and Age](#)

**RELATED POSTS**

**MORE FROM AUTHOR**



Your mental health matters: making the most of the support from your workplace



Mind and Body: Supporting Women's Health



Breaking the Silence: Recognizing Mental Health Benefits in the Battle Against Eating Disorders

[Scroll to top](#)

Stay Connected! Sign up to receive Department of Labor updates.

Email Address

SUBSCRIBE

[Agencies](#)

[Forms](#)

[Guidance Search](#)

[FAQ](#)

[About DOL](#)

[News](#)

[Contact Us](#)

Submit Feedback

[White House](#)

[Benefits.gov](#)

[Coronavirus Resources](#)

[Disaster Recovery Assistance](#)

[DisasterAssistance.gov](#)

[USA.gov](#)

[Notification of EEO Violations](#)

[No Fear Act Data](#)

[U.S. Office of Special Counsel](#)

## **LABOR DEPARTMENT**

[About DOL](#)

[Guidance Search](#)

[Español](#)

[Office of Inspector General](#)

[Subscribe to the DOL Newsletter](#)

[Read the DOL Newsletter](#)

[Emergency Accountability Status Link](#)

[A to Z Index](#)

## **ABOUT THE SITE**

[Freedom of Information Act](#)

[Disclaimers](#)

[Plug-Ins Used on DOL.gov](#)

[Accessibility Statement](#)



## U.S. DEPARTMENT OF LABOR

200 Constitution Ave NW

Washington, DC 20210

[1-866-4-USA-DOL](tel:18664USA-DOL)

[1-866-487-2365](tel:18664872365)

[www.dol.gov](http://www.dol.gov)

### Connect With DOL



[Site Map](#) |

[Important Website Notices](#) |

[Privacy & Security Statement](#)