

A **serious mental illness (SMI)** is defined as a mental, behavioral, or emotional disorder resulting in serious functional impairment, which substantially interferes with or limits one or more major life activities.<sup>i</sup>

**2 MILLION**

young adults have a serious mental illness in the United States.<sup>ii</sup>

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**Young adults (aged 18-25) have the highest prevalence of SMI (5.9%)**

compared to adults aged 26-49 (5.3%) and aged 50 and older (2.7%).<sup>iii</sup>

**TAKE ACTION**  
on the next page!



*The Importance of Addressing*

**SERIOUS  
MENTAL ILLNESS**

*in Youth and Young Adults*

Youth and young adults (YYA), aged 16-25, with serious mental illness most commonly experience **depression** (21.6%), followed by **bipolar** (14.6%), **disruptive** (14.2%), and **anxiety** (12.9%) disorders.<sup>iv</sup>

**48.5%**

of young adults with an SMI **did not access** any mental health services in 2016.<sup>v</sup>

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34.9% — or 711,000 — young adults with an SMI also have a **co-occurring substance use disorder**.<sup>vi</sup>

**77.4%**

of youth experiencing homelessness have an SMI.<sup>vii</sup>

# TAKE ACTION

(for medical, mental health, and substance use disorder providers):

- **Encourage** YYA to take an active role in making decisions about their treatment<sup>viii</sup>
- **Collaborate** with the youth's other service providers<sup>ix</sup>
- **Be accessible** to YYA in several ways — in-person, by phone, text, email, etc.<sup>x</sup>
- **Involve parents**, friends, and caregivers in the process by educating them about the YYA's treatment and recovery, noting available community services, and aiding in the transition to independent adult living<sup>xi</sup>
- **Be culturally-responsive** to the unique needs of the YYA being served
- **Be proactive** in early intervention when addressing serious mental illness in YYA to reduce long-term consequences<sup>xii</sup>
- **Support workforce training** for providers to develop the skills and knowledge needed to work with YYA and their families

<sup>i</sup> National Institute of Mental Health Information Resource Center. (2017). Mental illness. Retrieved from <https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/statistics/mental-illness.shtml>

<sup>ii</sup> Ahrensbrak, R., Bose, J., Hedden, S.L., Lipari, R.N., & Park-Lee, E. (2017, September). Key Substance Use and Mental Health Indicators in the United States: Results from the 2016 National Survey on Drug Use and Health (HHS Publication No. SMA 17-5044, NSDUH Series H-52). Rockville, MD: Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). Retrieved from <https://www.samhsa.gov/data/sites/default/files/NSDUH-FFR1-2016/NSDUH-FFR1-2016.htm>

<sup>iii</sup> Ibid.

<sup>iv</sup> Pottick, K. J., Warner, L. A., Vander Stoep, A., & Knight, N. M. (2014). Clinical characteristics and outpatient mental health service use of transition-age youth in the USA. *The Journal Of Behavioral Health Services & Research*, 41(2), 230-243. doi:10.1007/s11414-013-9376-5.

<sup>v</sup> Childress, S., Reitzel, L. R., Maria, D. S., Kendzor, D. E., Moisiuc, A., & Businelle, M. S. (2015). Mental illness and substance use problems in relation to homelessness onset. *American Journal Of Health Behavior*, 39(4), 549-555. doi:10.5993/AJHB.39.4.11

<sup>vi</sup> Ibid.

<sup>vii</sup> Ibid.

<sup>viii</sup> Delman, J., Clark, J. A., Eisen, S. V., & Parker, V. A. (2015). Facilitators and barriers to the active participation of clients with serious mental illnesses in medication decision making: the perceptions of young adult clients. *Journal of Behavioral Health Services & Research*, (2), 238.

<sup>ix</sup> Ibid.

<sup>x</sup> Ibid.

<sup>xi</sup> Gerten, A., & Hensley, M. (2014). Transition-age children with mental illness: Hearing the voices of mothers. *Social Work In Health Care*, 53(3), 233-249. doi:10.1080/00981389.2013.873514

<sup>xii</sup> McGorry, P.D. (2015). Early intervention in psychosis: Obvious, effective, overdue. *The Journal of Nervous and Mental Disease*, 203(5), 310-318.

