



STATE OF MICHIGAN

GRETCHEN WHITMER  
GOVERNOR

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES  
LANSING

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## **Mental Health Awareness Month takes on new importance in wake of COVID-19 pandemic**

*Mental wellness resources available at [Michigan.gov/StayWell](https://Michigan.gov/StayWell)*

LANSING, Mich. – After a year in which the COVID-19 pandemic challenged the mental resiliency of all Michiganders, Gov. Gretchen Whitmer and the Michigan Department of Health and Human Service (MDHHS) join mental health advocates across the nation in recognizing [May as Mental Health Awareness Month](#).

Observed nationally since 1949, Mental Health Awareness Month promotes mental health education and support in hopes of decreasing the stigma often associated with seeking help for mental illness.

“This Mental Health Month and year-round, we must remember that it’s OK to not be OK,” said Governor Whitmer. “I encourage Michiganders to reach out to friends or family who may be struggling or get help themselves if they need it. Together, we can remove the stigma around accessing mental health care and uplift each other.”

“The pandemic has highlighted the critical role mental health plays in our overall wellbeing,” said Elizabeth Hertel, MDHHS director. “Recognizing May as Mental Health Awareness Month serves as a reminder to honor our minds as we work to fight this pandemic. And of course, we also want to honor the countless professionals across the state who work tirelessly to help individuals with mental illness get the support they need.”

Across the U.S., reports of increased stress-related conditions are high as individuals face the strains of the COVID-19 crisis. According to recent data (March 3 – 15, 2021) from the Household Pulse Survey conducted by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the U.S. Census Bureau, more than 30% of Michiganders reported symptoms of anxiety or depression during the seven days prior to being surveyed. The survey shows Michigan’s self-reported symptom numbers have hovered between 30% and 49% since December 2020. According to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), the negative psychological impacts of a disaster can last for months or years – and if left untreated, can contribute to mental illness.

MDHHS is working on several fronts to focus attention on mental health as part of public health. The Michigan Suicide Prevention Commission recently released an [initial report](#) with recommendations on how to reduce the suicide rate, including increasing and expanding access to care for at-risk Michiganders.

Early in the pandemic, MDHHS partnered with the Federal Emergency Management Administration and SAMHSA to develop the Stay Well program, offering emotional support through the Stay Well counseling line seven days a week, 24 hours a day (dial 888-535-6136 and press “8.”) The program’s website, [Michigan.gov/StayWell](https://michigan.gov/StayWell), offers links to a variety of mental health resources, including crisis help lines, virtual support groups, guidance documents, videos and recorded webinars.

For mental wellness resources, visit [Michigan.gov/StayWell](https://michigan.gov/StayWell).

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