



Landmark Study Reveals Gaps in Behavioral Healthcare System for Racial and Ethnic Minorities

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Columbus, OH – Different racial and ethnic groups experience different levels of access to behavioral healthcare. This is not because of genetic or biological differences, but because of the ways racism impacts marginalized individuals in the United States – and Ohio is no exception.

To quantify the true level of disparity in Ohio, a landmark study is being conducted by a partnership among Central State University (CSU), the Mental Health & Addiction Advocacy Coalition (MHAC), Multiethnic Advocates for Cultural Competence, Inc. (MACC), and Ohio University (OU). The study, titled [*Behavioral Health in Ohio: Improving Data, Moving Toward Racial and Ethnic Equity*](#), will be released in four parts throughout 2023.

“The first installment provides an overview of the issues. The second focuses on workforce, the third looks at treatment, and the fourth addresses funding,” explains Joan Englund, Executive Director of MHAC. “The findings from each one will provide stakeholders with essential resources for building a stronger, more equitable behavioral healthcare system in Ohio.”

The first installment, released on January 18, reveals many of the barriers to care which marginalized individuals experience, including stigma, racism, and provider bias. This all leads to poorer quality of care and worse behavioral health outcomes.

“We are hoping to come up with some actionable items that are based in data driven and evidence based strategies that will help policymakers bridge the gap and get a little bit closer to achieving equity within the behavioral health system within Ohio,” shares Omesh Johar, Associate Professor of Psychology at Central State University.

The study also provides recommendations based off the findings such as improving data collection; tailoring prevention and treatment interventions to be culturally competent; training elected officials in cultural competency; and setting up a task force that will hold stakeholders accountable for reporting positive change.

“We want to ensure every Ohioan who needs mental health or substance use support is considered and has access,” says Tracy Maxwell Heard, Executive Director of MACC. “And not just access, but access to care that provides the best chance for full recovery or the best possible outcome. That means making sure they feel seen and understood, which means seeing people who look like them among those providing the services, making sure the language barrier is addressed, and making sure there is an understanding within the workforce of the cultures being served.”

With this study, the state has an opportunity to begin addressing the disparities in Ohio's behavioral health system, which will positively impact society, politics, education, and public discourse for all Ohioans.

Tracy Plouck, Assistant Clinical Professor at Ohio University, says, "Our research team hopes that the findings and recommendations from this project will be used by policymakers and advocates to help affect change and help people achieve better access and a higher quality of care where today inequality exists."

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Creative Assets:

YouTube Video featuring interviews with partners: <https://youtu.be/natapcp07gE>

Link to study: <https://mhaadvocacy.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/Installment-1.pdf>

Executive Summary: [https://drive.google.com/file/d/1Vr9ruzCszvGlagavbos69PizWN3B-HAw/view?usp=share link](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1Vr9ruzCszvGlagavbos69PizWN3B-HAw/view?usp=share_link)

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