



# A Solemn Celebration: Minority Mental Health Month

July 5 2013 4:38 PM

The U.S. House of Representatives proclaimed July as National Mental Health Minority Month in 2008 to raise awareness for mental illness in minority groups and to honor [Bebe Moore Campbell](#), an author and co-founder of National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) Urban Los Angeles. Since then, people and organizations from all over the country have been celebrating this month and trying to improve mental health resources for minorities in the U.S.

The status of your mental health affects your overall wellbeing, regardless of your race, but—as [a report by the Surgeon General in 2001](#) proved—your race does affect what types of mental health resources are available to you. The report said that non-whites are just as likely as whites to experience mental illness, but they are less likely to receive mental health treatment and are more likely to receive poor treatment if they do find help.

A study conducted by the Asian American Psychological Association in 2005 concluded that Asian Americans show higher levels of psychological distress (in comparison to other groups) when they come in for counseling. The same study suggested this is because many Asian Americans postpone seeking treatment.

Many people delay seeking mental health treatment because they are afraid of being humiliated or shunned by their peers, or because they have few places to turn to for help. Unfortunately, postponing treatment can have devastating consequences. According to Office of Minority Health (a sector of the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services) “suicide attempts for Hispanic girls, grades 9-12, were 70% higher than for White girls in the same age group, in 2011.” [The Centers for Disease Control found that the highest suicide rates from 2005-2009 were among American Indian/Alaskan Native males with about 27 suicides per 100,000.](#) This number may be even larger because suicide is considered shameful or taboo among some Native American groups, and many suicides may go unreported.

Why does this happen? Some of the reasons suggested include:

- Some minority populations represent a majority of low income households and are not able to afford mental health services. [According to the U.S. Census Bureau, in 2009 the median income for white families was over a little over \\$60,000 while the median income for African-Americans and Hispanics hung just below \\$40,000.](#)
- These individuals may feel embarrassed or ashamed, and avoid seeking treatment. This happens in both minority and majority groups.
- Immigrants in the U.S. are often met with language barriers that make it difficult for them to become enrolled in or receive treatment.
- Some minorities report experiencing racism and prejudice when seeking treatment by organizations, doctors, clinicians or other consumers of mental health services.
- When minorities (immigrants or American-born) finally do receive treatment, cultural differences can lead to misunderstandings with mental health professionals and may lead to an improper diagnosis or discontinuation of treatment.

[WellSpring Resources](#), a behavioral health services provider located in Alton, Illinois, would like to invite community members from every race to support Minority Mental Health Month by encouraging others to seek help for their mental health issues or to seek help for themselves. WellSpring Resources is a non-profit organization and provides services to people of all races, ages, and genders, regardless of their ability to pay. For more information about Mental Health Minority Month or about WellSpring Resources call Alexandra Cope at (618) 462-2331.

Founded in 1959, WellSpring Resources is a total mental wellness resource serving Madison, Greene, Jersey, and Calhoun counties. With offices in Alton and Jerseyville WellSpring's compassionate professionals work with children, adults and families to inspire hope and personal growth. Last year, 4,600 people sought to change their lives for the better through WellSpring's mental health and substance abuse services. Visit [www.wellspringresources.co](http://www.wellspringresources.co) for more information.

The service's Mental Health Court Case Management, Senior Services, Outpatient, Adult Community Support and Child/Adolescent Community Support and provider WellSpring Resources is funded by the Madison County Mental Health Board.