



Anti-stigma *Resource Kit*

The Allegheny County Office of Behavioral Health through its Anti-Stigma Initiative seeks to improve the overall quality of life for county residents who have mental illness by reducing the stigma these individuals face in their lives. Through a partnership with the Behavioral Health Inclusion Project, we have developed a resource packet which contains a wide range of tools we would like to make available to area faith communities.

Spirituality and faith play a very important role in our communities. Across Allegheny County, congregations of all denominations bring families together and provide emotional support to their members. Researchers have found that many individuals seek help from clergy more frequently than from other professionals. Mental health issues are no exception. When dealing with mental illness, families look for guidance, support and understanding more readily from their religious communities in many circumstances.

Faith communities have long been considered community resources offering support to persons in need. Clergy are readily available and accessible and enjoy high levels of trust. The relationships they have with individuals and their families are often long term and many pastors can mobilize the assistance of sizable numbers of volunteers greatly amplifying their impact.

We have developed a packet of resources which we would like to make available to clergy and health ministries which often exist in various faith communities. Through providing resources for the use of key members of each spiritual community, we can help them be more effective in addressing the concerns of their congregations as they relate to stigma and mental illness.

We invite you to review the materials and feel free to copy, distribute or utilize them as you see fit to meet the needs of your congregation. In doing so we would like to remind you that these materials are in no way intended to serve as an alternative to professional consultation and evaluation. We do hope that they will help to educate those who read them regarding mental illness and the stigma related to it and in doing so, motivate our communities to take action as we move forward in our work to eliminate stigma related to mental illness.

You are also welcome to visit the website of the Allegheny County Coalition for Recovery where you can find additional resources we feel will be of value to your congregations. The enclosed table of contents lists all the resources that are available. Those marked by an asterisk are only available online.

These resources can be found at the Allegheny County Coalition for Recovery website
<http://coalitionforrecovery.org/>.