Dickinson-Iron District Health Department

Dickinson County
818 Pyle Drive, Kingsford, MI 49802
Ph: (906) 774-1868   Fax: (906) 774-9910
BRANCH OFFICE

didhd.org

Iron County
601 Washington Ave, Iron River, MI 49935
Ph: (906) 265-9913 Fax: (906) 265-2950
MAIN OFFICE

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Contact Information:
Kelly Rumpf, 779-7234

Dickinson-Iron District Health Department
Celebrates Public Health Week in April

Kingsford and Iron River, MI, April 4-10, 2022 - No matter where you are, American Public Health Association (APHA) invites you to join us as we celebrate National Public Health Week! This year's theme, Public Health Is Where You Are, celebrates what we know is true: The places where we are, physically, mentally and societally, affect our health and our lives. As we celebrate the 27th National Public Health Week (NPHW), April 4-10, we want everyone to know they can make their communities healthier and safer for all. And as we move slowly back toward gathering in person, we're focusing not just on what we can do as individuals, but what we can do as communities to protect and prioritize public health.

This NPHW, we're taking a look at the intersections of our lives that affect our health and well-being. And we're encouraging everyone — public health professionals, students, elected leaders and the general public — to step in and do what they can to make our world a more equitable, safe, healthy and just place. We're also going to have some fun along the way. We hope you'll join us. Below is Sunday's theme, "Mental Wellness: Redefining the Meaning of Health." To see the other themes for the week, please visit National Public Health Week Public Health is Where You Are www.nphw.org. Please consider taking action and do your part where relevant. We all need to do our part.

For science.
Mental health is a critical component of public health. It consists of emotional, psychological and social well-being and is important from childhood through adulthood. But many people live with mental illness – health conditions that change the way we think, feel or behave, which can affect our lives and our work. In the United States, mental illness is one of the most common health conditions. Each year, one in five Americans will experience mental illness. Fifty percent of mental illness starts by the age of 14, and 75% begins by the age of 24. People who identify as being two or more races are more likely to report mental illness than other races, followed by American Indian/Alaska Native, Caucasian and Black populations. For all racial groups, except American Indian/Alaska Native, women are more likely than men to receive mental health services.

For action.
Advocacy for mental health is crucial, especially with the COVID-19 pandemic. Ask Congress to make mental health services readily available during the current and future public health emergencies. Get involved in Project 2025 — an initiative to reduce the annual rate of suicide. Learn about suicide prevention and intervention by joining the National Alliance on Mental Illness

or APHA's Mental Health Section. And if you or someone you know is in need of mental health service, contact the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's national helpline at 1-800-662-HELP.

For health.
The COVID-19 pandemic can affect mental health in many ways, including through loss of a loved one, isolation due to physical distancing mandates, exposure to the virus and loss of income. Given the past year's strain, it's not surprising that health care workers have a high risk of developing mental illness. Strategies like being physically active, getting a full night's sleep, eating a well-balanced diet, practicing gratitude, participating in activities you enjoy, developing coping skills, meditating and connecting with others can improve mental health. People who engage in physical activity have fewer days of poor mental health than people who do not exercise. Talking to a licensed therapist, joining a support group or 12-step program or considering medication under the supervision of a physician can all be beneficial.

Where you are.
There is no single cause for mental illness, and certain childhood risk factors, including growing up in poverty or experiencing abuse, can be an indicator for mental illness later in life. Genetics, isolation and use of alcohol or drugs are other contributing factors as well. Unaddressed mental health challenges can have an impact on employment, housing stability, safety and a range of other issues. This underscores the urgency of access to better treatment and coping options for those most at risk. Prevention, early detection and treatment of mental health conditions can lead to improved physical and community health. Public health can incorporate mental and emotional health development and promotion into prevention strategies and activities. This can make health promotion more effective and protect people from other issues that have lasting physical and mental health impacts, such as community and interpersonal violence, tobacco use and homelessness.

If you are struggling with mental health issues and are looking for ways to cope or have family members who are, please don't wait and begin to explore your options. Help is available. Please have that necessary and possibly hard conversation with your primary care physician. This is a good place to start!

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