Picture This:
Mental Health in Pittsburgh

A Local Community Approach to "Encouraging the Art of Making a Difference"
This event was a result of EIC's Entertainment and Media Communication Institute's Mental Healthcare: Media Blueprint Think Tank where a vision was set forth, "To increase the nation's mental health and decrease the burden of mental illness." It was at this event, EIC vowed to work with members of Congress to communicate about mental health issues at the local level.
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"We recognized that the impact of media is huge. And that's why we are here - to exchange ideas and information among a wide range of professionals, the media, the mental health field, families and others concerned. The media is a great avenue for this."

—Congressman Tim Murphy
Foreword

Dear Reader:

Picture This: Mental Health in Pittsburgh is a unique approach to support and position mental health concerns within the community through strategic partnerships dedicated to making a difference. The goal of Picture This is to establish ongoing relationships to successfully determine the most pressing mental health-related concerns of the great city of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania through the convening of local media leadership, Pittsburgh-based mental health medical experts, local stakeholders, elected officials, advocacy leaders, policy experts and scholars.

The local "media industry" has a unique ability to influence attitudes and behaviors that affect the public’s health by raising awareness and providing accurate, timely and newsworthy information. The Entertainment Industries Council, Inc. (EIC), in collaboration with WPXI Channel 11, developed Picture This: Mental Health in Pittsburgh to identify priorities for news coverage, community service activities, public service announcements and story portrayals.

EIC and WPXI Channel 11 are pleased to be catalysts in Pittsburgh through a community action media strategy that will serve our public by innovatively addressing mental health issues. During a time when there are many problems that may advance mental illnesses such as the economy, the war, unemployment rate, the housing crisis and the realities of the financial market in America, this is an important and timely initiative.

In the increasingly complex media environment, it is important to note that local media plays an important role as primary information sources that have the power to reach the public in an unequivocally significant community-centered manner. By enriching the opportunities for local story tellers, news providers, journalists (radio, print, broadcast and online) and public officials to address mental health related stories with a high degree of accuracy, the Pittsburgh audience gains greater knowledge while decreasing mental illness stigma in the community.

This publication is intended to encourage further coverage of mental health as well as support the news reporting process with fresh news angles, and timely, accurate information about mental health-related issues. It is also intended to encourage real, personal stories of individuals who have experienced mental illness first-hand, along with tips and ideas for consideration to proactively position mental health concerns in Pittsburgh’s media space.

It is our pleasure to partner with Congressman Tim Murphy who Co-Chairs the Congressional Mental Health Caucus. We are also greatly appreciative of the time dedicated to this effort by all community mental health stakeholders. All those who participated in the forum should be extremely proud of this accomplishment.

Thank you for your commitment of time and passion in addressing mental health issues in Pittsburgh.

Brian Dyak, President and CEO
Entertainment Industries Council, Inc.
www.eiconline.org

Ray Carter, General Manager
WPXI Channel 11, Pittsburgh
www.wpxi.com
March 24, 2009

Dear Picture This Participants:

I would like to welcome the participants of the Picture This event gathered here today. I appreciate your willingness to come together as we work to break down the barriers to understanding mental health in the Pittsburgh media market and our own communities.

A very special thank you goes out to Ray Carter, General Manager of WPXI for hosting us at the WPXI studios. I hope that other stations will see the critical role the media has to play in debunking the stigma of mental illness. As we begin this dialogue on how best to approach these issues in the media, I applaud WPXI for their willingness to lead.

As co-chair of the 21st Century Healthcare Caucus, child psychologist, author and former media personality, I understand the importance of making mental health a priority in our communities and in Congress. Inaccurate portrayals of mental illness in the media can wrongly shape the perception of the people that suffer from these illnesses. As we continue to break down the stigma of mental illness, we must each recognize we have a role to play.

Thank you to the Entertainment Industry Council for your efforts in bringing this important event home to Pittsburgh. Accurately portraying mental health issues in the local media is something we all need to continue to work towards. I want to extend my sincere thanks for your efforts in reaching our shared goal of putting a human face on mental illness and ending discrimination.

I look forward to continuing to work together.

Sincerely,

Tim Murphy
Member of Congress
Introduction & Event Description

The Goal

EIC and WPXI Channel 11 united to raise awareness and eradicate the stigma associated with mental health issues. The purpose of Picture This: Mental Health in Pittsburgh was simple: Create greater awareness about mental health in Pittsburgh through the acquisition, sharing and imparting of knowledge.

How? Local media (including newscasters and journalists in broadcast, print and online media outlets), medical experts, communication experts, stakeholders and elected officials, Congressman Tim Murphy and State Representative Jake Wheatley, in the Pittsburgh community were convened at WPXI Channel 11 studios to identify strategic ways to strengthen the awareness of mental health services in Pennsylvania. A panel of Pittsburgh media professionals present included, Corrie Harding, WPXI News Director; Jonas Chaney, WPXI Public Affairs Director; David Johnson, WPXI Anchor; Mark Roth, News Reporter, Pittsburgh Post-Gazette; and Erika Beras, Behavioral Health Reporter, WDUQ FM.

This event was a result of EIC’s Entertainment and Media Communication Institute's Mental Healthcare: Media Blueprint Think Tank where a vision was set forth, "To increase the nation’s mental health and decrease the burden of mental illness." It was at this event, EIC vowed to work with members of Congress to communicate about mental health issues at the local level.

Read on to learn about the conversations that took place and the priorities identified as the most effective way to use the power of the media in changing the way the public perceives mental health. To watch video clips from the event and access up-to-date mental health information, resources and services please visit: http://www.wpxi.com/health/19010443/detail.html. This website was developed by NBC’s WPXI Channel 11 especially for the Picture This: Mental Health in Pittsburgh forum as a resource for the Pittsburgh community by the WPXI team.

By portraying mental illnesses as natural and treatable phenomena, entertainment media can help to make seeking treatment more acceptable than it may previously have been.

—Gary Sachs, MD

Director of the Bipolar Clinic and Research Program Massachusetts General Hospital; Associate Professor, Harvard University; Representative of EIC’s Mental Health Think Tank
Depiction Priorities and Recommendations for Local Pittsburgh Media

A diverse representation of experts and professionals (including individuals representing veterans’ affairs, clergy, consumers, psychiatrists and psychologists, researchers, advocates and other stakeholders) who interface with various facets of mental health on a daily basis in Pittsburgh was convened to come to a consensus on depiction priorities and recommendations for local news and scripted fiction and non-fiction media to address mental health.

Southwestern Pennsylvania is rich in resources to treat people with mental health issues. But where do the unemployed or those without health insurance turn for outpatient services? Develop a compendium of local resources using various private and public sector providers, so that every time there’s a story about a health issue, a scroll at the bottom of the screen appears on where to get help.

We asked our Picture This experts this question:

"If mental health-related issues could be addressed in print, electronic and broadcast news in any manner, what are the most important aspects of mental health to communicate to Pittsburgh audiences?"

The following reflect the top priorities as identified by our expert attendees:

Priority 1: Produce success stories that are newsworthy, but that are also good dramatic programming.

- Consider buttoning down the success stories, not just to the individual, but to the family and the community, and how they actually participate in the recovery process.
- Try to talk about success stories not just in terms of how treatment works and whether treatments work, but also include a more functional aspect to how the treatment and recovery plan involves the patient. People that are severely ill at some point do recover or improve over time.
- Consider portraying how patients are able to go back to work or how they are able to care for their families. Include very concrete things that people go through and are affected by when people are not feeling as well as they would like to feel.
- Don’t just focus on the extreme aspects of how treatment works, but also consider portraying that improvements bring some kind of functional satisfaction as well, such as pooling the importance of family, friends, and social support in the recovery process.
- Early identification about everyday changes in a persons living, sleeping, appetite and relationships would be appropriate. Early intervention by teachers and clergy will allow people to have early access to care and to the full range of care.
Priority 2: Promote the idea that there is no good health without good mental health; the integration of body and mind.

- We oftentimes think of mental health as psychological, that it is not of the body. The truth is that there's good evidence that it's somewhere in your brain, that there are brain systems that are involved in those symptoms. So, it is a physical disorder in the same way that hypertension or other types of cancers that have behavioral manifestations and emotions to associate it with. Consider portraying characters dealing with a mental illness as if it were any other illness of the body you would depict.

- Schools and the medical community together, should promote the concept of wellness and physical health. If your storyline includes schools or medical communities, consider integrating the promotion of wellness and physical health with regard to mental illness portrayals in local news and scripted fiction and nonfiction media.

- There many effective treatments for mental illness and most people with mental health problems can be helped with professional intervention. The emotional drama that goes along with an intervention can be very captivating. Consider weaving professional interventions for treatment into mental illness portrayals.

- All aberrant behavior is not the result of mental illness. Most crimes are not committed by people who are mentally ill. Most mentally ill people don’t commit crimes. Take this into consideration when developing character traits and behaviors.

Priority 3: Compare systems that produce people who are hesitant to come forward with their stories to those systems that allow for more collaboration throughout the community.

- Differentiate between the meaning of mental health and mental illness and that there are certain mental illnesses that don’t fall in the normal range or continuum of mental health. (See “What is Mental Health?” in a subsequent chapter of this report.)

- When discussing recovery, management of an illness or prevention, it is a different genre than discussing neurological illnesses. The media can be helpful in depicting the struggle, issues and support people need.

- Human Resource personnel are reporting that the number of insurance claims for stress-related problems has increased because people don’t want to talk about depression, suicide or bipolar disorder; but they are all in the spectrum of mental health. Consider portraying the impact of mental health within the workplace.

Priority 4: Bridge the gap between what researchers find and the best practices in clinical arenas so that evidence-based practice is being implemented on an everyday basis.

- If everyone in the community monitors the development of families and their children through adulthood, there would be a greater likelihood to focus not just on pathology (causes and
effects of disease), but on things that work; milieus for people that tend to produce less suicidal pathology. Consider multigenerational depictions that portray mental illness being addressed and treated as a normal part of a characters' family.

- Public schools and universities need to better educate people to identify signs and symptoms of mental health issues for early diagnosis and appropriate referrals for treatment. Classroom settings provide for great opportunities to depict mental illness being addressed by faculty, peers and other university staff.

- Consider portraying the further study of fragmentation versus the integration of health care; and the relationship between mind and body. Approach it cross-generationally as well as on an individual basis researching mind-body interactions, community levels, funding sources, and the state policy-making level.

**Priority 5: Provide a more realistic representation of what people with mental health issues are dealing with. Take a spectrum approach between health and illness.**

- Recognize that where the threshold for normality or abnormality is can vary depending on circumstances, developmental stages and ongoing stressors at the same time.

- Try to limit the portrayal of isolation in mental illness. There is no reason to convey the idea that people need to suffer, rather that they should not suffer. This not only includes the people who are affected with mental health issues, but also their families who are affected by the consequences of it.

- Patients may end up in the doctor’s office, but there are new ways of delivering education, information, diagnostic tools and treatments in a way that takes advantage of technology and new methodologies to deliver a treatment. Make them as culturally meaningful and relevant as possible.
Your Developing News Stories

Questions to Ask

Here are some sample questions to ask as you are researching and developing storylines involving mental health:

- Can you position the story in a manner that focuses on the successes of individuals with mental illness rather than negative depictions that may perpetuate stigma in feelings of fear, mistrust and shame?
- Does the storyline convey that effective treatments for most conditions of mental health-related illnesses are available (but underutilized)?
- Does the storyline acknowledge the person’s problems and struggles as well as the positive aspects of his or her life to give a more balanced report with hope?
- Does the audience see the effects of mental illness on relatives and friends?
- Did the individual have a problem with substance abuse?
- Does the storyline convey that mental illness is a form of physical illness rather than a character flaw?
- Does the storyline represent mental illnesses as the chronic illnesses that they are?

Language/Terminology

It is essential to use healthy terminology when writing about mental health. Using the proper terminology can eliminate stigma in society.

Keep in mind that a person suffering from a mental illness is not defined by the illness. Oftentimes people are referred to as the illness and not as a person that is coping with the illness. To make certain you use healthy terminology and expressions, see the list below to ensure you are expressing mental health issues in a sensitive and respectful manner.

Disrespectful Language:

- Derogatory Labels
  
  Avoid, where possible, any slang term referring to mental illness, including crazy, lunatic, nuts, deranged, deficient, wacko, loony tune, psycho, mad, freak, weirdo, schizo, manic, handicapped, special, slow, low-functioning, retarded, disturbed, weird, strange, insane, loco, abnormal, normal, and other words with negative connotations or inherent judgments. Also, avoid phrases such as "off his meds" when used in a judgmental or derogatory context.
Myths vs. Facts

Your accurate, timely news stories provide an indispensable public service by debunking common myths and misconceptions about mental health-related issues.

The following myths and facts may help to clarify mental health issues and underscore the need to address the priority messages identified regarding stigma, hope, integration of healthcare, parity, and decriminalization of the mentally ill.

Myth: There’s no hope for people with mental illnesses.
Fact: There are more treatments, strategies, and community support systems than ever before, and even more are on the horizon. People with mental illnesses lead active, productive lives.

Myth: I can’t do anything for someone with mental health needs.
Fact: You can do a lot, starting with the way you act and how you speak. You can nurture an environment that builds on people’s strengths and promotes good mental health.

Myth: People with mental illnesses are violent and unpredictable.
Fact: In reality, the vast majority of people who have mental health needs are no more violent than anyone else. You probably know someone with a mental illness and don’t even realize it. People with mental illness are more often the victims than they are the aggressors.

Myth: Mental illnesses cannot affect me.
Fact: Mental illnesses are surprisingly common; they affect almost every family in America. Mental illnesses do not discriminate—they can affect anyone.

Myth: Mental illness is the same as mental retardation.
Fact: The two are distinct disorders. A mental retardation diagnosis is characterized by limitations in intellectual functioning and difficulties with certain daily living skills. In contrast, people with mental illnesses-health conditions that cause changes in a person’s thinking, mood, and behavior-have varied intellectual functioning, just like the general population.

Myth: Mental illnesses are brought on by a weakness of character.
Fact: Mental illnesses are a product of the interaction of biological, psychological, and social factors. Research has shown genetic and biological factors are associated with schizophrenia, depression, and alcoholism. Social influences, such as loss of a loved one or a job, can also contribute to the development of various disorders.

Myth: People with mental illnesses cannot tolerate the stress of holding down a job.
Fact: In essence, all jobs are stressful to some extent. Productivity is maximized when the right fit is found for the employer and the individual, regardless of mental illness or mental health.

Myth: People with mental health needs, even those who have received effective treatment and have recovered, tend to be second-rate workers on the job.
Fact: Employers who have hired people with mental illnesses report good attendance and punctuality, as well as motivation, quality of work, and job tenure on par with or greater than other employees.
Studies by the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) and the National Alliance for the Mentally Ill (NAMI) show that there are no differences in productivity when people currently being treated for a mental illness are compared to other employees.

**Myth:** Once people develop mental illnesses, they will never recover.  
**Fact:** Studies show that most people being treated for their mental illnesses get better, and many recover completely. Recovery refers to the process in which people are able to live, work, learn, and participate fully in their communities. For some individuals, recovery is the ability to live a fulfilling and productive life. For others, recovery implies the reduction or complete remission of symptoms. Science has shown that having hope plays an integral role in an individual’s recovery.

**Myth:** Therapy and self-help are wastes of time. Why bother when you can just take one of those pills you hear about on TV?  
**Fact:** Treatment varies depending on the individual. A lot of people work with therapists, counselors, their peers, psychologists, psychiatrists, nurses, and social workers in their recovery process. They also use self-help strategies and community supports. Often, these methods are combined with some of the most advanced medications available.

**Myth:** Children do not experience mental illnesses. Their actions are just products of bad parenting.  
**Fact:** A report from the President's New Freedom Commission on Mental Health showed that in any given year 5-9 percent of children experience serious emotional disturbances. Just like adult mental illnesses, these are clinically diagnosable health conditions that are a product of the interaction of biological, psychological and social factors.

**Myth:** Children misbehave or fail in school just to get attention.  
**Fact:** Behavior problems can be symptoms of emotional, behavioral, or mental disorders, rather than merely attention-seeking devices. These children can succeed in school with appropriate understanding, attention, and mental health services.
**Key Speakers:**

**Ray Carter, General Manager, WPXI, NBC Channel 11**

"Over the years Channel 11 has been an innovator. Typically we cover news. Usually, we do not host a seminar, especially on an issue like mental health. So, this is a little out of the ordinary. But when you look at the times in which we live and at the pressures on everybody in this society; when you look at the economy, joblessness and the financial markets, issues of mental health have never been more pronounced. We are excited to create a model community action plan that not only will serve this community, but we hope can be used as a model for other communities. The goal is to connect people with community resources. I know the joy of knowing where those resources are and to feel empowered to make those connections and get the necessary help."

**Congressman Tim Murphy**

"I'm trying every angle to get every member of Congress involved. If they're not involved in a caucus, then I'm going to get them involved in one. But where we have nexus has to do with the accurate portrayal of mental health in the media. It is quite important because through entertainment is sometimes the only place people will see any portrayal at all. You may not read a book about it, it may not touch your family immediately; but viewers may see something on ER, Law & Order or The Office. We really have three issues we're dealing with the media. One is the portrayal of mental illness, two is making sure we understand how it affects attitudes and beliefs about mental illness, and three is what can be done to break down some of the stigmas. As we continue to break this down, we have all roles to play. About 54 million Americans suffer some mental illness. According to mental health studies, suicide is the eighth leading cause of death in United States, a leading cause..."

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of death among adolescents and the elderly. About 30,000 Americans commit suicide annually, and 500,000 Americans attempt suicide annually. And those are folks who are looking for a sense of hope and oftentimes feel hopeless. We recognized that the impact of media is huge. And that’s why we are here - to exchange ideas and information among a wide range of professionals, the media, the mental health field, families and others concerned. The media is a great avenue for this."

State Representative Jake Wheatley

"I started to hear stories from advocates and families after working in this field and began asking myself in my own life, had I known, maybe I could have been a better friend, son or brother to that person who was suffering and didn’t know where to turn. So, I went to my leadership and said: I now understand that we have a crisis in our health care system, and mental health should be a part of our structure. We need to create a subcommittee on mental health so we can raise the awareness of members in the General Assembly as well as to the general public. I ask this question as I go out now, how many of you all make sure that you get an annual physical checkup each and every year? Now, that same amount of folk who raised their hand, I ask them, how many of you make sure you get a mental health checkup every year? I am glad we are going to have this conversation and hopefully start to see images and portrayals of everyday folks who live normal productive lives with a mental illness.

I am glad we are going to have this conversation and hopefully start to see images and portrayals of everyday folks who live normal productive lives with a mental illness.

Media Panelists:

Corrie Harding, News Director, WPXI

"The images you see on the local news: there’s a chopper flying over a house, SWAT professionals are surrounding the house, and we inevitably talk about the mental health of the person inside. Those are the images you see quite frequently on local TV. We’re not talking about stories like the one that I experienced with a friend about a teacher who called and said, ‘I think your son suffers from Asperger Syndrome.’ We don’t normally do that. We don’t normally talk about stories where someone is successfully dealing with a battle with depression, instead of ones where people lose the battle with depression.

A challenge is a mechanism to get the people who are impacted to talk about

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it. The most important thing that we do everyday is have people talk about the news. News entities and organizations themselves need to develop a way to connect with the people directly that are affected by mental health issues. And you know that's a challenge as well as I do.

I want to know those stories, and I want to know those people. Depression is a terrible challenge. We need to ask ourselves over and over again, when we talk about it on this level what is the news hook? What can we tell people today that's different than yesterday? What can we tell people tomorrow that will be different than today? Then the thing that we've got to look for, are those things that will resonate with the people who aren't experiencing it right now on a news level."

Jonas Chaney, Community Affairs Director, WPXI

"When you consider the fact that there are more than 25 million adults 18 and older who experience serious psychological distress, you may wonder why every Public Service Announcement we run doesn't deal with this problem. But, it is always easier to define mental illness than to define mental health. And from a public service perspective I think it's important to get the word out that mental health is more than the absence of mental illness.

For example, a good positive psychology characteristic is resilience. Why do some people bounce back? Someone can go to war in Iraq or Vietnam and they don't have a problem while others are ruined for life. Some become U.S. Senators, while others just can't cope. How we deal with the loss of a loved one and death is also an important element of mental health. And one of the more enlightened public affairs shows that I produced involved a good grief center for bereavement and support. The package includes a custom-made journal, music and meditation CD and an orchid that can make all the difference in the world.

As community affairs director, I'm happy to be in a position, where I can at least make a difference, and at least get the discussion started."

David Johnson, News Anchor, WPXI

"I can say with certainty that both our reporters and anchors, everybody behind the scenes, through our training and life experience have a great deal of sensitivity to anyone affected by mental health issues. When we cover a story, be it family members, victims of crime, public safety workers, doctors, or the medical community we take great care to listen. We know that the wrong word or phrase carries great weight because when people speak of this, when they're personally affected by this, that their lives are at
stake. With all the relationships people have built up over the years that to misstep in our work cause people pain."

Mark Roth,
News Reporter, Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

"I think for people in the media, in all forms of media, to tell stories about mental health and emotional issues properly, we need to feature people who are going through the experience. I certainly have used a lot of material from experts, doctors and researchers, but to tell a complete story, nothing beats being able to talk to the people who are going through it. It’s also frustrating for media to get access to patients. I’m also very aware of how courageous it is for people who chose to do this.

For years, the news media has stuck with the practice of not identifying victims of rape because of the stigma of being a victim. That is still our standing policy. But slowly that’s changing, not because we’re changing the policy, but because women are refusing to look at themselves as a victim. They say, ‘If I don’t step forward talk about the experience, we’re going to continue to be looked at as victims, and I don’t want that.’ I think deciding to step forward is necessary, but also is a very courageous act. Even as society is beginning to be more open, we all know that the stigma is still there.

Also, sometimes what we report may clash with those who have a strong view about how it should be told. For example, a recent story concerned families who are withholding or delaying vaccinations for their children because of the fear that it can be linked to autism. Many in the medical community were furious because they thought we were giving credence to a discredited and unsupported notion. On the other side, others thought that we hadn’t told the truth about other contaminants that are in the vaccines. It wasn’t our job to take up advocacy or sides, but to report that it is a real phenomenon going on in the community. And that’s a challenge we’ve faced in the coverage of all these mental health issues."

Erika Beras, Behavioral Health Reporter, WDUQ FM Radio

"We need access to patients. We also need to talk to spouses, parents, to whoever is in their lives. It is always a challenge getting people with mental health issues to open up and talk. The other challenge we often face is deadlines, and that is people hear something on the radio and they think that it’s happening right now. There is sometimes a long production process; so often it is a challenge to get someone who can speak eloquently and explain mental health issues in very simple terms and to not talk medical jargon to listeners. If there are not sound experts in the field like hospital administrators, patients or the people going through it then there is no story."

Even as society is beginning to be more open, we all know that the stigma is still there.

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Table Facilitators Share Their Thoughts

...Why Pittsburgh?

"Why Pittsburgh? Mental health issues affect everyone - those who struggle with these issues, and their families. We have outstanding hospital- and community-based services led by internationally recognized experts who provide state-of-the-art prevention, evaluation, diagnostic, and treatment approaches to treat and/or manage mental health issues such as depression, schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, anxiety disorders, sleep disorders, and others so that individuals who struggle with these issues can lead fulfilling, productive lives. Expert care and resources are available for people of all ages, from children to older adults. We promote integrated care to include physical and mental health at the individual level, as well as the family and community levels."

—Anne Germain, Assistant Professor of Psychiatry Department of Psychiatry University of Pittsburgh Medical Center

Sensationalizing when a crime is committed by a person with a mental illness is misleading because, "Most people who commit crimes do not have a mental illness. Most people with a mental illness do not commit crimes."

—Dr. Melvin Melnick, President-Elect of the Pennsylvania Psychiatric Society and Corporate Medical Director of Pressley Ridge

"Current national prevalence estimates are that approximately 20% of the U.S. adult population is affected by mental disorders during a given year; and that, although prevalence estimates in children and adolescents are not as well documented as for adults, it is further estimated that about 20% of children have mental disorders associated with at least a mild level of functional impairment. Based on the national estimates, a similar proportion of Pittsburgh’s citizens may also be affected by mental disorders during any given year. Besides providing quality services today; Pittsburgh is on the forefront of shaping tomorrow’s mental health care through developing clinical innovations, educating future health care providers, and conducting cutting-edge mental health research. In addition to having Western Psychiatric Institute and Clinic, a national leader in the diagnosis, management, and treatment of mental and addictive disorders; Pittsburgh has numerous organizations (such as the Pittsburgh Chapter of the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention) dedicated to the common goal of promoting mental health and wellness in the region. Pittsburgh’s commitment to the mental health movement can also be seen through the provision of a comprehensive range of behavioral health services for mental health consumers that extend across the lifespan."

—Dr. Ann M. Mitchell, President Pittsburgh Chapter of the American Foundation of Suicide Prevention & Associate Professor, School of Nursing, University of Pittsburgh

"Pittsburghers take great pride in their work ethic, their resilience and their strengths- the Steel City that transformed itself, the City of Champions- making it likely that mental health concerns may seem to be issues one should be able to fix without help from others."

—Dr. Jeffrey Peters, Vice President, Behavioral Health Services Line VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System
What is Mental Health?

Mental health refers to a state of emotional and psychological well-being. Mental illness may include any of various conditions characterized by impairment of an individual's normal cognitive, emotional, or behavioral functioning, and caused by social, psychological, biochemical, genetic, or other factors.

Mental illness-related issues are very common in the United States. An estimated 26.2 percent of Americans ages 18 and older suffer from a diagnosable mental disorder in a given year. That is about one in four adults.

Mental Illnesses Defined:

- **What is depression?** Depression is a serious medical illness - not something exaggerated or made up. It is more than just feeling "down in the dumps" or "blue" for a few days. It involves feeling "down" and "low" and "hopeless" for weeks at a time.

- **What is Bipolar Disorder?** Bipolar disorder, also known as manic-depressive illness, is a serious medical illness that causes severe shifts in a person's mood, energy and ability to function.

- **What is Schizophrenia?** Contrary to the common misconception, it does not mean "split personality," but rather represents a constellation of symptoms that can include unclear thinking, feeling paranoid and hearing voices or seeing things others cannot. Schizophrenia is one of the most disabling and vexing mental disorders; just as "cancer" refers to numerous related illnesses; many researchers now consider schizophrenia to be a group of mental disorders rather than a single illness.

- **What is Social Phobia?** Social Phobia, or Social Anxiety Disorder, is an anxiety disorder characterized by overwhelming anxiety and excessive self-consciousness in everyday social situations. Social phobia can be limited to only one type of situation-such as a fear of speaking in formal or informal situations, or eating or drinking in front of others-or, in its most severe form, may be so broad that a person experiences symptoms almost anytime they are around other people.

- **Crisis Mental Health Response: The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration recommends that every community should have a Crisis Mental Health Plan as part of its overall Emergency Operations Plan. Local mental health providers are pre-trained and their job descriptions include responding to the psychological needs of first responders and community members during and after community crises. Crisis mental health responders may be drawn from community mental health centers, crime victim assistance programs, faith-based counseling agencies and social service agencies that serve special populations.**
Pennsylvania Facts and Figures: Did You Know…?

Mental Health Measures:

According to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMSHA), 10.94 percent of adults 18 years of age or older in Pennsylvania suffer from serious psychological distress. This translates to 1,029 adults. In addition, 6.50 percent of adults in Pennsylvania had at least one major depressive episode, which is 611 people. The percentage of youth in Pennsylvania, ages 12 to 17 who had at least one major depressive episode is 7.67. This equates to 79 children.vii

In Pennsylvania, suicide is the 11th ranking cause of death, with an average of 1,347 residents dying each year. This translates to an average of 3.7 suicides every day. Pennsylvania has a total of 10,357 hospitalized suicide attempts per year. This translates to 28.4 suicide attempts every day or 88.4 attempts per 100,000 people.viii

Rates of major depressive episodes in 2005-2006 were among the lowest in the country for all age groups, except those ages 18 to 25. Rates of 2005-2006 serious psychological distress have generally been at or below the national rates.ix
**Access to Care:**

In Pennsylvania, 10 percent of the population does not have health insurance. In addition, Pennsylvania allows the practice of medical underwriting to be applied during the application process of individual health insurance policies. Under this practice, the health insurance provider is allowed an opportunity to examine the applicant’s past and present medical conditions and, based upon their findings either approve, modify or deny coverage.

**Mental Health Services:**

Mental Health America: Allegheny County provides programs and services to support healthy minds and bodies and is dedicated to eliminating the stigma attached to mental illnesses. Some of their programs include:

- **Adult Mental Health Advocacy** works to ensure the rights of individuals residing in the state hospital as well as in the community.

- **Community Outreach** offers programs and information to community-based, faith-based, human service and other organizations that are in unserved or underserved communities in an effort to raise awareness of mental illness and encourage individuals to seek support and treatment, if necessary.

- **Education Advocacy** works with families and schools to ensure that children diagnosed with emotional/behavioral disorders and/or a mental illness receive appropriate education placement and services.

- **Mental Health America Legal Services (MHALS)** provides legal consultation and/or representation, on civil matters, for individuals receiving treatment and support services through the community mental health system.

- **Youth Advocacy** works with approximately 200 young men who reside in two youth development centers (YDC’s). The Youth Advocates work to protect the rights of the residents and to provide a bridge between the development center and aftercare.
Pennsylvania Community Resources

Active Minds
http://www.activeminds.org/
202.332.9595

Allegheny Coalition for Recovery
http://www.coalitionforrecovery.org/
412.325.0369

Allegheny HealthChoices Inc.
http://www.ahci.org/
412.325.1100

Autism Society of America
www.autismsocietypgh.org
412.856.7223

Center for Mind and Body Wellness
http://www.mind-body.org
814.333.5060

Childrens Hospital of Pittsburgh
http://www.chp.edu/CHP/Home
412.692.5325

Community Psychiatric Centers
communitypsychiatriccenters.com
877.899.6500

Consumer Health Coalition
http://www.consumerhealthcoalition.org/
412.456.1877

Department of Human Services Allegheny County
http://www.alleghenycounty.us/dhs/
412.350.5701

Depression and Bipolar Society of America, Pittsburgh Chapter
http://www.dbsalliance.org
800.826.3632
412.246.5588

Duquesne University
School of Nursing
http://www.nursing.duq.edu
412.396.6550

Facing Bipolar
www.facingbipolar.com
1-800-236-9933

Family Behavioral Resources
http://www.familybehavioralresources.com/
724.850.8118

Family Services of Western PA
http://www.fsdp.org/
888.222.4200

Greater Pennsylvania Alzheimer's Association
http://www.alz.org/pa/
412.261.5040

The Greater Pittsburgh Psychological Association
http://www.gppaonline.org/
412.441.7736

Heritage Valley Health System
http://www.heritagevalley.org/
412.741.6600

International Society for Bipolar Disorders
http://www.isbd.org
412.802.6940

IRETA
Institute for Research, Education, and Training in the Addictions
http://www.ireta.org/
412.391.4449

Jewish Family & Children's Service of Pittsburgh
http://www.jfcspgh.org/
412.422.7200

Mel Blount Youth Home of PA
http://www.melblount.com/
724.948.2311

Mental Health America, Allegheny County
http://www.mhaac.net/
412.391.3820
877.391.3820
Mercy Behavioral Health
http://www.mercybehavioral.org/
877.637.2924

Milestone Centers Inc.
http://www.milestonecentersinc.org/
412.243.3400

National Alliance on Mental Illness Southwestern Pennsylvania
http://www.namiswa.org
888.264.7972
412.366.3788

National Black Nurses Association, Inc
http://nbna.org
301.589.3200/800.575.6298

Obsessive Compulsive Foundation of Western Pennsylvania
http://www.ocfwpa.org/
412.363.6231

PA/MidAtlantic AIDS Education and Training Center
http://www.pamaaetc.org/
412.624.1895

Pennsylvania Training & Technical Assistance Network (PaTTAN)
http://www.pattan.k12.pa.us
412.826.2336

People’s Oakland
http://www.peoplesoakland.org/
412.683.7140

Persad
http://www.persadcenter.org/
412.441.9786

Pittsburgh Action Against Rape
http://www.paar.net
412.431.5665

Pittsburgh AIDS Task Force
http://www.paf.org/
888.204.8821
412.345.7457

Pittsburgh Mercy Health System
http://www.pmhs.org/
412.232.7920

Pittsburgh Mind-Body Center
http://pmbcii.psy.cmu.edu/
412.624.2148

Pittsburgh Regional Health Initiative
http://www.prhi.org/
412.586.6700

Pittsburgh Social Anxiety Support Group
http://www.pittsburghsocialanxiety.com/
412.255.1155

The Plea Agency
http://www.plea-agency.org/compeer.html
412.243.3464

Pressley Ridge
http://www.pressleyridge.org/
412.872.9400

S’eclairer
http://www.seclairer.com/
724.468.3999

Shepherd Wellness Community
http://www.swconline.org/
412.683.4477

Turtle Creek Valley Mental Health/Mental Retardation Inc
http://www.tcv.net/
412.351.0222

UCLID at University of Pittsburgh
http://www.uclid.org
412.692.6300

University of Pittsburgh Center for Minority Health
http://www.cmh.pitt.edu
412.364.5665

University of Pittsburgh
EIC commends WPXI Channel 11 as the first station in the Pittsburgh market to take the lead in establishing a comprehensive mental health resource page on their website. Please visit http://www.wpxi.com/health/19010443/detail.html to gain mental health information as well as to consider how you might also create a mental health resource page.

Brian Dyak, President and CEO of the Entertainment Industries Council, Inc., addresses the Picture This audience.
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End Notes


'Suicide Prevention Resource Center. 10, April 2009. www.sprc.org


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- HIV/AIDS
- Homeland Security
- Human Trafficking
- Humor & Healing
- Injury Prevention
- Intellectual Disabilities
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