

PAHO



Pan American
Health
Organization



World Health
Organization
REGIONAL OFFICE FOR THE
Americas



News release

World Mental Health Day - October 10

PAHO Launches New Campaign to Curb Stigma Against People with Mental Health Problems

Following an increase in depression and anxiety due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the initiative will use social media to promote positive interactions



Washington, DC, October 7, 2022 (PAHO) - The Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) is launching [#DoYourShare to support mental health](#), a campaign that seeks to curb the stigma and discrimination experienced by people with mental health problems, and promote positive interactions that improve their search for help.

Various studies show that stereotypes, prejudices, and discriminatory behaviors towards people with mental health problems are common.

Through messages on social media, *#DoYourShare to support mental health* invites people to break the silence, share their story, and have an open and honest conversation about "how they are... really."

"The more we talk about our mental health, the closer we get to reducing the stigma that surrounds it," said Renato Oliveira e Souza, chief of PAHO's Mental Health unit. "And when the stigma diminishes or disappears, seeking and receiving support becomes more feasible," he added.

Mental health conditions are common around the world and have been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, which had a general impact across the population. A study published in *The Lancet* estimates a 35% increase in depressive disorders and a 32% rise in anxiety disorders in Latin America and the Caribbean in 2020, due to the pandemic.

"It is possible for most people to recover from mental health conditions if they receive the necessary care," Oliveira e Souza said. "For that to happen, [health professionals](#) must ensure a safe environment and provide quality, inclusive care that is free of labels," he added.

"PAHO's campaign is crucial to helping people understand that any of us can face a mental health problem at some point in our life, and that this doesn't have to block our goals and dreams in life," said Professor Sahar Vasquez, who experienced a mental health condition firsthand and is now a member of the Organization's High-level Commission on Mental Health and COVID-19.

In addition to ending the stigma and discrimination that stand in the way of recovery, PAHO's campaign urges national authorities to guarantee funding for mental health care, train more professionals in this area, and distribute them appropriately, so that everyone who needs them can access them.

People who visit the PAHO website will be able to access videos, social media cards, and other resources on what they can do to reduce stigma and discrimination, share their story, and support mental health. More than 30 countries in the Region of the Americas have joined the initiative so far and will carry out various awareness-raising activities.

The campaign was launched on the eve of World Mental Health Day, which is celebrated annually on October 10 to raise awareness about mental health issues around the world. The day is also an opportunity to mobilize efforts in support of the mental health of the population.

Mental health is a state of mental well-being that enables people to cope with the stresses of life, realize their abilities, learn well and work well, and contribute to their community. Mental health is a basic human right.

Links

[#DoYourShare to support mental health](#)

[How health care providers can help to reduce stigma and discrimination](#)

[PAHO High-level Commission on Mental Health and COVID-19](#)

MEDIA CONTACTS

Luciana Viegas: + 1 202 981-8455

Ashley Baldwin: + 1 202 340-4025

Sebastian Oliel: +1 202 316-5679

mediateam@paho.org

www.paho.org

The Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) works with the countries of the Americas to improve the health and quality of life of its population. Founded in 1902, it is the world's oldest international public health agency. It serves as the Regional Office of WHO for the Americas and is the specialized health agency of the Inter-American system.