

Northland Healthy Minds:

Community-led mental health coalition working to eliminate stigma associated with mental illness.

The need:

About 1 in 5 adults in the U.S. experiences a mental illness in a given year.

Periodically, local health departments and nonprofit hospitals are required to conduct a Community Health Needs Assessment (CHNA). The process includes examining health status indicators and gathering community feedback to identify priority health issues. For the 2016-2019 period, mental health was identified as one of the highest priorities in both Duluth, MN, and Superior, WI.

Coalition Forms:

To begin addressing this need, a handful of local organizations across the Northland began meeting in June of 2017 and they formed Northland Healthy Minds (NHM). NHM has now grown into a coalition of more than 50 organizations in Northeastern Minnesota and Douglas County, Wisconsin, including representation from public, private, non-profit and faith-based organizations.

NHM envisions a world where anyone can receive the support and assistance they deserve for their mental illness without fear of discrimination, marginalization, and criminalization due to stigma.

2017/2018 Goals:

- Increase awareness through community events, media attention and employer settings regarding the prevalence of mental illness.
- Eliminate stigma surrounding mental illness through community outreach and education through utilization of the Make It OK campaign.
- Highlight local and national resources available to support mental health.

Make It  .org

The strategy:

In its first year, NHM created four sub-committees; executive committee, communications committee, events committee, and employer groups committee. A grant provided by HealthPartners, along with donations from Essentia Health, St. Luke's, and Generations Health Care Initiatives made it possible to implement the activities in year one.

The sub-committees worked together to achieve the following:

- A series of community events in May 2018 for Mental Health Awareness Month (see pg. 2)
- A Make It OK implementation guide for employers
- Four Make It OK employer orientations
- Trained more than 30 Make It OK Ambassadors
- Created a mental health care resources wallet card
- Organized three Mental Health First Aid classes
- Sponsored Fidgety Fairy Tales in two elementary schools
- Coordinated mental health resource fair with more than 30 local agencies
- Garnered significant local media attention with more than 10 news features
- Worked with HealthPartners to administer stigma impact survey

Local Mental Health Care Resources

1. **Birch Tree Center Crisis Line**
24-hour crisis phone line for support, information and problem solving
Call: 218-623-1800
2. **Txt4life/Crisis Text Line**
Text-based help with relationship issues, general mental health and suicidal thoughts
Text "MN" to 741741 and a counselor will text back
3. **Northland Children's Mental Health Collaborative**
Youth mental health resources for children and families
northlandchildrensmentalhealth.org
4. **NAMI (National Alliance on Mental Illness) Duluth Area**
Resources, support groups and advocacy
namidulutharea.com
5. **Let's Talk, Region 3 Mental Health Initiative**
24-hour mental health resources
letstalkmn.com

Mental Health Awareness Month Events

- Joint proclamation on May 1: City of Duluth, City of Superior and St. Louis County declared May as Mental Health Awareness month (~45 in attendance)
- The YMCA hosted a free mental health day, opened their doors to the public and posted a large Make It OK banner for people to sign the pledge
- Free film screening of "Suicide: The Ripple Effect" (~75 in attendance)
- Free Community Dinner and Mental Health Resource Fair Featuring John Moe (~400 in attendance)
- Laughter Yoga offered free and to the public (~55 in attendance)
- 38 additional events submitted by other community organizations or employers throughout the month of May



Pledge banner posted at the local YMCA. More than 150 signatures were collected.

Year one successes:

- ✓ 36 employers participated in Make It OK reaching approximately 26,000 employees
- ✓ Approximately 1,200 people attended or participated in a community event during the month of May
- ✓ Second highest website traffic on MakeitOK.org (~800 users) came from Duluth-Superior area in May
- ✓ Positive feedback from participants and attendees from all events

Creating a sustainable future

Mental health awareness is a year-round issue. With this in mind, NHM has formed an executive committee, and established a relationship with a fiduciary agent. It has also contracted with a part-time consultant to act as the organization's coordinator to facilitate the creation of a long-term strategic plan and to coordinate, implement and evaluate additional solutions to further this work. NHM continues to seek financial partnerships to fund its activities.

Event attendees were asked, "What will you do to Make It OK?"

Their responses included:

- *Obtain help for myself*
- *Be a better listener*
- *Drink less and less often*
- *Call my brother*
- *Tell a friend that I'm struggling*
- *Listen to the Hilarious World of Depression and share with others*
- *Check in with new moms I know and make sure they're getting the help they need if they struggle with PPD*