

COMMON BARRIERS TO MENTAL HEALTH TREATMENT



Black Mental
Wellness

The Mecca of Black Wellness



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Take a moment to think about all the reasons someone may decide not to seek mental health (MH) treatment when needed. These are often called “barriers to care.” While there may be a number of barriers to care, highlighted below are the barriers most commonly reported among Black/African Americans and important information to know when working to overcome them. Acknowledging common barriers to care may help normalize the reasons an individual may have for not seeking treatment and give guidance for strategies mental health providers and/or health systems can implement to help decrease these barriers.

Common barriers:	Important to consider:
<p>Logistical reasons Concerns related to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finances • Location of services • Limited time • Wait time for available clinician • Number of sessions being too limited, • Hours available for services being inconvenient or unrealistic for life demands/circumstances 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If you do not have insurance there are MH services available on sliding fee scales • If a provider does not take your insurance, ask for referrals to providers who do. • If availability and location are significant barriers, use these factors to help guide potential search for services. Check out resources section for helpful guides.
<p>Worries and fears related to stigma and judgement Concerns related to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Privacy/confidentiality • Worry of what others will think of them • Worry that one’s faith or belief in God may be questioned by faith community or family • Judgement of one’s racial identity as mental health concerns are “a White person’s problem” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mental health professionals understand the importance of having a safe place to talk, without fear of that information leaving the room. • By law mental health professionals are required to protect your privacy, except under circumstances where you may be a harm to yourself or others • All people can experience a mental health concerns, regardless of race or spiritual identity. • Mental health professionals can work with you to incorporate important aspects of your identity in your treatment.

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<p>Cultural competency/sensitivity Concerns about:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People providing services not being sensitive enough or knowledgeable enough of cultural issues • Having to spend time in treatment explaining cultural background 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sharing important aspects of your identity with potential provider (e.g., "my racial identity is really important to me, I think this is important for our work together.") can help enhance treatment. • Preferences for providers with a particular background or values should be expressed. • Remain open to someone from a different background being helpful and work to be clear about needs related to identity.
<p>Limited problem recognition Concerns about:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are problems serious enough for treatment, despite severity of symptoms and decreases in functioning or how one is doing in day to day tasks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Given ancestors experiencing historical trauma (e.g., slavery), individuals may believe that a problem is not "bad enough" to seek any additional resources or help, despite possible symptoms indicating severity or problems with everyday functioning. • There are screenings available online that are helpful for self-assessing the severity of a particular set of concerns. Some helpful screenings for youth and adults can be found here: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ https://www.integration.samhsa.gov/clinical-practice/screening-tools ○ http://screening.mentalhealthamerica.net/screening-tools
<p>Questioning related to benefits of treatment and quality of treatment Concerns about:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Past negative experiences with the health system, medication use, or therapy • Past evidence of the significant misdiagnosis and/or mistreatment of African Americans medically (e.g., Tuskegee Experiments) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is important to think about how one might respond after a bad experience at a restaurant, or barber. Would one never attend another restaurant, or never try a new barber again? • Shopping around for the right "fit" and holding professionals to the legal standards of their practice, is important.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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RESOURCES

Psychology Today

www.PsychologyToday.com

Psychology Today's Therapy Directory lists clinical professionals, psychiatrists and treatment centers that provide mental health services in the US and internationally.

Therapy for Black Girls

www.TherapyForBlackGirls.com

Therapy for Black Girls is an online space dedicated to encouraging the mental wellness of Black women and girls.

Zoc Doc

www.ZocDoc.com

With Zocdoc, you can see doctors' open appointment times and book instantly online, make informed choices with verified reviews, and stay on top of important checkups with tailored reminders.

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