**Decision Making and Policy (Part 1)**

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ADM-624-O500: Public Governance

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Wednesday, October 25th, 2023

**TITLE: POLICY MEMO ON IMPROVING MENTAL HEALTH ACCESSIBILITY AND AWARENESS**

Date: 25th October 2023

To: Chief Medical Officer,

From: Za’keria Blount, Psychological Counselor,

RE: Summary of Mental Health Accessibility Issues and Proposed Policy Updates

The healthcare sector faces many issues, poor awareness, and accessibility of mental health services. Mental health is an issue that, although it is not much considered as a key or important health aspect, affects an individual's health. Not many people admit to being depressed even though they are or have psychological issues when they are. Mental health is the key to the health of an individual. In many communities, especially those inhabited by low-income people, there are no mental health clinics or awareness of the need for mental health services. Most importantly, mental health services are only available to the rich or the financially well-off people, or due to career choices, some organizations have these services for their employees. There are several challenges faced by mental health, which will be overseen in this memo, as well as the workable solutions. These issues show serious challenges that need policy updates, such as follows.

The first is stigmatization and a lack of awareness of mental health issues and problems (Shim et al., 2022). Mental health issues stigmatization has remained one of the biggest challenges and barriers to seeking, giving, and receiving good mental health services. Some various misconceptions and stereotypes negatively affect the mental health sector and its services and, at the same time, discourage many from seeking help when they need it. Many people think that those mentally sick and crazy are the only ones who need mental health services while others are afraid of letting the psychologists into their minds; they will mess or misguide them.

Secondly, mental health is limited for underserved communities (ZhanelP, 2022). The underserved communities include people with low income and their neighborhoods or those in rural areas. It is not easy for these people to access mental health services because, to them, there is no extra money to pay for the services, or better, the mental health services do not exist in their areas. As a result, many suffer from mental health issues, whether they know it or not, because these services are unavailable. Some of these people may know what kind of treatment they need; however, these services are out of their reach.

Thirdly, the medical insurance coverage does not cover or cater to mental health treatment and related services (Arinder, 2016). Many medical health insurances do not cover a patient's mental health. At the same time, mental health services are quite expensive for normal people, and the failure of medical insurance coverage to cover them makes it hard for them. Many people find it extremely hard to cover their daily lives, families, and children, pay for insurance and taxes, and afford mental health treatment out of pocket. As such, the failure of insurance coverage to cater to even mental health treatment makes many people run away from seeking mental health services and help.

As a psychological counselor and mental health advocate, there are workable solutions to the above problems. First, it is important to prioritize expanding mental health services, particularly focusing on these underserved communities. To achieve these, there is a need to allocate more funds to mental health and form strategic partnerships, especially with community organizations, which will effectively address all these problems and improve the accessibility of many people to mental health (Shim et al., 2022). The rationale behind this is that many of the people from the undeserved communities bear a lot of heavy burdens, especially when it comes to accessing mental health services. Expansion of mental health services to these undeserved communities will help in bridging the gap (Arinder, 2016), which exists by ensuring that mental health services are accessible to all people despite their socioeconomic status or their location. Implementing this solution will also help increase mental healthcare for this underserved population.

The second solution is increasing mental health awareness in rural areas and underserved communities. Educating the masses on the importance of mental health will help many people understand how crucial mental health is. At the same time, it will help many with stigma and stereotypes towards mental health understand that mental health care is as important as any other kind of health treatment. Additionally, it is also important to improve the overall well-being as well as the productivity in these communities. Improving mental health accessibility and awareness will lead to a more productive and healthier community. This will also equip the community with better ways to deal with mental issues and ensure that their mental health is kept in check. Mental health awareness also ensures that these people are taught diverse ways to positively impact their personal lives at work and ways of exercising to ensure that they have healthy bodies. Executing these solution simulations (Kim et al., 2013), this is what to expect in six months.

In conclusion, expanding mental health services to these rural areas and underserved communities is just another paramount method to address the awareness and accessibility that is currently faced in the mental health sector. This will be not only a policy recommendation but also an action-oriented policy that will enhance the landscape of mental health for more people. Reaching and educating more people on the importance of mental health, what it is, and ways to ensure they keep their mental health in check will help many people. Keeping a healthy society is the key to many things, whether it is education, work, or building the country.

**References**

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