Network of the National Library of Medicine, Region 6

Locating and Sharing Local Mental Health Information Resources Guide

This guide provides tools and strategies for identifying, compiling, and sharing local mental health information resources within your community. By focusing on local information, you can ensure that community members have access to relevant, accessible, and effective mental health services. This guide includes templates for creating resource directories, guidelines for evaluating resource effectiveness, and strategies to promote the use of these resources among community members.

Locating Local Mental Health Resources

Identifying available mental health resources within your community is the first step in ensuring community members can access the support they need. Local resources such as mental health services, support groups, helplines, and other support networks and information sources are often more accessible and relevant to community members than national resources.

Locate Local Resources

- Contact Local Health Departments and Community Health Centers: Start by contacting local health departments, community health centers, and public health organizations. These entities often have up-to-date information on mental health services, including counseling, crisis intervention, and support programs available in the area.
- Collaborate with Public Libraries: Libraries are community hubs that often maintain resource directories and provide space for local support groups and workshops. Connect with library staff to gather information about mental health-related events, information resources, and available services.
- Engage with Local Nonprofits and Advocacy Organizations: Organizations like NAMI (National Alliance on Mental Illness) local chapters, mental health nonprofits, and community advocacy groups are excellent sources for finding support groups, peer support networks, and mental health resources tailored to specific needs (e.g., LGBTQIA+, veterans, or youth).
- Use Online Community Resource Directories: Websites such as local United Way chapters, community foundations, or municipal websites often provide directories of local services, including mental health resources. Search for local directories or online databases that compile community service information.
- Network with Schools, Universities, and Faith-Based Organizations: Educational institutions and faith-based organizations frequently provide mental health resources or know of available services in the community. Contact school counselors, university health services, or local religious leaders for information.
- Contact Local Helplines: Helplines such as 211 or local warm lines can provide information about mental health resources and connect individuals to services tailored to their needs.

Creating a Community Resource Directory

Creating a directory of local mental health resources is an effective way to ensure community members have easy access to the support they need. This section provides a step-by-step guide to developing a user-friendly and informative directory, including a template for organizing information about local resources.

Create a Resource Directory

Conduct Community Assessments:

- Gather Resource Information: Collect detailed information about each resource, including the name, contact details, type of service provided, hours of operation, eligibility requirements, and any fees involved.
- Organize the Directory: Use a clear and logical format to organize the directory. Categories could include types of services (e.g., crisis intervention, counseling, support groups), specific populations served (e.g., youth, seniors, LGBTQIA+), and geographic location.
- Create a Template: Use a template to ensure consistency in how each resource is listed. A simple template might include:
    - Name of Resource
    - Description of Services
    - Contact Information (Phone, Email, Website)
    - Location and Hours of Operation
    - Eligibility Criteria
    - Cost or Fees (if any)
    - Additional Notes (e.g., language support, accessibility options)
- Regularly Update the Directory: Ensure the directory is updated regularly to reflect any changes in services, contact information, or availability. Establish a process for periodically checking in with listed resources.
- Distribute the Directory Widely: Make the directory available in multiple formats (print, online, and digital copies) and accessible, including translating the directory to common languages in your area, and distribute it through community centers, libraries, schools, healthcare facilities, and local organizations.

Guidelines for Evaluating Resource Effectiveness

Not all resources are equally effective, and it's important to evaluate them to ensure they meet the needs of community members. This section provides guidelines for assessing the quality and effectiveness of mental health resources, ensuring they are reliable, accessible, and provide meaningful support.

Evaluate Resources

Steps to Evaluate Resources

- Assess Accessibility: Determine if the resource is easily accessible to community members. Consider location, hours of operation, transportation options, and any language or cultural barriers.
- Review Qualifications and Credibility: Ensure that mental health professionals and organizations providing services are properly credentialed and have a good reputation in the community. Verify licenses, certifications, and accreditation.
- Evaluate Service Relevance: Consider if the services provided by the resource are relevant to the community's specific needs. For example, assess whether specialized services exist for groups such as veterans, LGBTQIA+ individuals, or adolescents.
- Gather Feedback from Users: Collect feedback from community members who have used the resources. Surveys, focus groups, or informal interviews can provide valuable insights into the effectiveness and user satisfaction of the services.
- Monitor Outcomes and Impact: Track outcomes such as the number of individuals served, improvements in mental health, or reduction in crises. This data can help determine the impact of the resource and guide any necessary adjustments.

Strategies for Promoting Resource Utilization

To maximize the impact of mental health resources, promoting their use among community members is crucial. This section outlines strategies to raise awareness of available resources, encourage utilization, and foster community engagement.

Steps to Promote Resource Utilization

- A structured and organized approach to collaboration is vital for the success of any community initiative. Forming a steering committee or coalition with representatives from each partner organization is a practical way to establish a collaborative structure. This group should include key community members such as local health departments, mental health professionals, community leaders, libraries, and representatives from schools, nonprofits, and faith-aHost Community Awareness Events: Organize events such as mental health fairs, workshops, and presentations to raise awareness about available resources. Involve local mental health professionals and organizations to provide information and answer questions.

- Leverage Social Media and Digital Platforms: Use social media platforms, community websites, and digital newsletters to share information about mental health resources. Create engaging content that highlights the availability, benefits, and accessibility of local services.

- Collaborate with Local Media: Partner with local newspapers, radio stations, and television networks to run public service announcements (PSAs) or feature stories on mental health resources. Highlight the importance of mental health and available community support.

- Engage Community Influencers: Work with local leaders, influencers, and trusted figures to promote mental health resources. Personal endorsements from respected community members can effectively encourage resource utilization.

- Provide Resource Information in High-Traffic Areas: Place resource directories and promotional materials in high-traffic locations such as libraries, grocery stores, community centers, schools, and healthcare facilities.

- Develop Culturally Relevant Materials: Ensure all promotional materials are culturally relevant, inclusive, accessible, and available in multiple languages to reach diverse community members.

Templates and Tools for Resource Sharing

Effective resource sharing requires well-organized templates and tools to ensure consistency and accessibility of information. This section provides customizable templates and tools that can be used to compile, share, and promote local mental health resources effectively.

Suggested Templates

- Resource Directory Template: A template to organize and display information about local mental health resources, ensuring consistency and ease of use.
- Community Outreach Flyer Template: A flyer template that can be customized with information about local mental health events, services, or workshops.
- Feedback Form Template: A template for gathering feedback from community members about their experiences with local mental health resources to help improve services and identify gaps.
- Social Media Post Template: A template for creating engaging social media posts that promote local mental health resources, events, and awareness campaigns.

Conclusion

By focusing on local information and leveraging community-specific resources, organizations can effectively support mental health needs within their communities. This guide provides the tools and strategies necessary to locate, evaluate, and promote local mental health resources, ensuring all community members can access the support they need.

Access the full Mental Health Information Community Partnerships Toolkit
https://www.nnlm.gov/guides/mental-health-information-community-partnerships-toolkit