



Recognizing and Improving The State of Mental Health In Rural America



WeCAN Mental Health Solutions Roundtable

February 8, 2024

The Story Behind Rural Minds



Rural Minds Founder Jeff Winton was raised on his family's dairy farm in rural upstate New York. Growing up, he was aware of residents struggling with mental illness in silence.

However, the wake-up call was the suicide of Jeff's beloved 28-year-old nephew, Brooks. It led to Jeff establishing Rural Minds to focus on confronting mental illness in rural America through education and resources.



What Drives Rural Minds

The mission of Rural Minds is to serve as the informed voice for mental health in rural America, and to provide mental health information and resources.

Our vision is a rural America where there's no more silence, suffering or stigma around mental illness.



Rural Mental Health Inequity

Compared with their urban counterparts, rural Americans have higher depression and suicide rates, but are less likely to access mental health care services.

The Rural Mental Health Emergency

Recent data from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) indicated that:

Suicide rates among people living in rural areas are 64 to 68 percent higher than those in large urban areas.

The Rural Mental Health Emergency

- ❑ **46 million** Americans, approximately 14% of the population, live in rural areas.
- ❑ In 2020, an estimated **12.7 million rural adults** suffered from a behavioral health issue, such as a mental illness, substance use disorder, or other psychiatric conditions.
- ❑ Growers and producers, farmers, and ranchers are **nearly twice as likely** to die by suicide compared to other occupations.
- ❑ Youth living in rural areas are at a **greater risk of suicide** than those living in urban areas.
- ❑ Suicide rates are growing at a **faster pace** among rural youth.

Rural Barriers to Mental Health

Nearly 3/4 of rural counties lack a psychiatrist

20% fewer primary care physicians than in urban counties

Nearly 3 in 10 rural Americans (28%) do not have broadband internet at home

81% do not have a psychiatric nurse practitioner

Rural Lifestyle Challenges to Mental Health



Self-imposed barrier of asking for help when taught to pursue self-reliance as a virtue.



Lack of trust in anyone to maintain confidentiality in a small, close-knit community.



Fear of negative judgement from others as being incompetent or less capable.



Difficulty getting an appointment with limited availability of mental health professionals.



Time and transportation required for long-distance travel to meet with a mental health professional.

Rural Lifestyle Challenges to Mental Health



Unreliable, expensive, or nonexistent internet service for online video or telehealth appointments.



Lack of adequate health insurance coverage.



Feeling of isolation without having access to talk with someone outside of the community who understands mental health challenges in rural America.



Weakening agricultural economy, financial instability.



Solitary way of life can create greater barriers around race, class, disability, sexual orientation and gender identity.



A Partnership To Improve Mental Health In Rural America



Growing Hope Together Through Rural Resilience

The National Grange / Rural Minds partnership:

- ❑ Provides hope through information and resources to help improve the mental health emergency in rural America.
- ❑ Values the self-reliance of many people in rural America as a source of strength for confronting the problem.
- ❑ Acknowledges the courageous conversations about mental illness and suicide that must be heard.
- ❑ Encourages those in rural communities who are trusted leaders and sources of reliable information to embrace this initiative.
- ❑ Empowers rural Americans with the mental health information and resources they need to become part of the solution to improving mental health and minimizing the stigma of mental illness in rural communities across the country.



Rural Mental Health Resilience – A Program of Hope

The Rural Mental Health Resilience Program materials – available on the **program webpage** and promoted through the **program flyer** – include:

- **Data and statistics** about the mental health emergency in rural America.
- Mental health **challenges of rural lifestyle**.
- **Myths and facts** about mental illness and suicide prevention.
- Mental health condition **fact sheets**.
- **Suicide awareness** and prevention information.
- Free mental health **resources**.
- **Conversation starters** to talk about mental illness and help overcome stigma.
- Rural mental health **presentation materials**.
- Community event **“how to” guide**.



Rural Mental Health Resilience – A Program of Hope



THE MENTAL HEALTH EMERGENCY IN RURAL AMERICA



Based on the following mental health facts and statistics, the 46 million people who live in rural America are facing a mental health emergency.



Rural America is currently facing a mental health emergency that is placing an enormous strain on rural communities. With limited access to mental health resources in these areas, many individuals are not receiving the treatment they need. The lack of mental health services in rural communities, coupled with the stressors of rural living, such as isolation, limited job opportunities and financial struggles, have led to a significant increase in mental health issues. Additionally, the stigma surrounding mental illness in rural areas often prevents people from seeking help.

Rural Depression and Suicide Rates

- Rural Americans have higher rates of depression and suicide, but are less likely to access mental healthcare compared to people living in urban areas.

- According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), suicide rates are 64% to 68% higher for people living in rural areas compared to people living in large urban areas.

Rural Healthcare Shortage

HOW TO START THE CONVERSATION ABOUT MENTAL HEALTH

Starting a conversation about a mental health challenge is a powerful way to help stop the stigma that often affects people who are struggling with a mental illness.

Keep in mind that you don't need to be a mental health expert to confront stigma. By talking openly about mental health and showing compassion for those with mental illness, we can end the silence and stop the stigma of mental illness.

5 COMMON MYTHS ABOUT RURAL MENTAL ILLNESS & SUICIDE



In crisis? Call or text 988



In crisis? Call or text 988

suicide. It is preventable and help is available.

Changing behavior:

- Increasing the use of drugs or alcohol
- Withdrawing from loved ones
- Sleeping too little or too much
- Experiencing dramatic mood swings
- Acting recklessly



Rural Mental Health Resilience – A Program of Hope

Resources to Host a Rural Mental Health Event:

- Event Planning Roadmap
- Key Messages for a Community Conversation
- PowerPoint Slide Presentation
- Editable Event Brochure | Sample Event Brochure
- Media Alert
- Detailed Media Release
- Interview Q&A Template
- Social Media Post Graphics
- Printed Banner PDF
- Website Banner Graphic
- Yard Sign



How You Can Use 'Rural Resilience' Program Materials

1. Visit the [Rural Mental Health Resilience Program](#) webpage.
2. Attach program flyer, facts sheets or other program documents to an email that you can send to your network of contacts.
3. Copy the website address (URL) for the program flyer and insert it as a link in your social media posts so others can click on the link and find the document.
4. Print a quantity of program flyers (available as a PDF document on the webpage) and post the flyers on bulletin boards at local cafés, businesses, places of worship or distribute at community events.
5. Consider using [key messages](#) and [slides](#) provided on the program webpage to host a conversation or presentation about improving rural mental health in your community.





Developing information and resources to confront mental health challenges in rural America and the stigma that surrounds mental illness.



Rural Minds Newsletter

Rural Minds Newsletter Volume 2 | Issue 6 | December 2023 | [View as Webpage](#) | [Donate](#)



RURAL MINDS
MOVING FORWARD
Confronting Mental Health Challenges in Rural America

Our mission is to serve as the informed voice for mental health in rural America, and to provide mental health information and resources. We are working to confront mental health challenges in rural communities and the stigma that surrounds mental illness.

A Message from Rural Minds Founder and Chairman Jeff Winton



As you'll read in this newsletter, the past few weeks have been especially busy and productive for the Rural Minds Team. This included many presentations and media interviews across the country, as well as the launch of our new Rural Mental Health Resilience Program at the 157th Annual National Grange Convention in Niagara Falls, New York, and at the 80th Annual National Association of Farm Broadcasting Convention in Kansas City, Missouri.

[Read Rural Minds “Moving Forward” Newsletters.](#)



Connections Webinar Series

RURAL MENTAL HEALTH CONNECTIONS WEBINAR SERIES



[Watch Rural Minds "Connections" Webinars.](#)



Our Partnership Includes You

Become part of the solution to improving rural mental health when you:

1. Confront the mental health emergency in your local community and throughout rural America.
2. Encourage or allow difficult conversations about mental illness and suicide that must be heard.
3. Know the facts about rural mental health challenges, mental illness, and suicide.
4. Serve as a trusted source of information so you can help your family, friends and community.
5. Empower yourself and others with the knowledge to become part of the solution for improving rural mental health and reducing the stigma surrounding mental illness in your community.





“Sometimes the loudest cries
for help are silent.”

– Harlan Coben



Thank You!

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www.RuralMinds.org

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