

Global Coalition on Youth Mental Health

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Letter of Support to G7 Leadership

January 24, 2018

We urgently request your support to secure a sustained G7 commitment to address the impacts of mental illness on youth around the world. Mental illness continues to have devastating effects on society, and we stand at a critical turning point that demands national and global leadership. These conditions affect one-in-four people at some point, yet prejudice, stigma, and access barriers prevent most individuals from receiving adequate care. In G7 countries, treatment coverage for mental illness remains unacceptably low.

Most mental health conditions begin in adolescence and disproportionately affect women and girls, inflicting damage that can last for a lifetime. 75% of all mental illnesses manifest by age 24, and, for the first time in recorded history, the leading cause of death for girls ages 15-19 worldwide is suicide. Furthermore, the economic burden of mental illness is greater than cancer, diabetes, and chronic respiratory diseases combined – and depression alone results in economic loss of \$1 trillion per year globally.

Many individuals with mental illness suffer in silence and lose hope for healthy, productive, and engaged lives. This loss of human potential ripples across families, relationships, and societies—a tragic, but often invisible burden in every community in the world. Thus, a focus on enhancing youth mental health offers unprecedented opportunities for progress, in both society and the economy. In fact, one recent World Health Organization-led study showed a 4-to-1 return on investment in mental health promotion. Global leaders can seize this potential to save and improve lives, foster future inclusive growth, and transform how societies approach mental health.

Global and national leaders can—and must—take action to address these challenges and provide desperately needed support. Though the barriers are significant, experience shows that global leaders can drive progress on our world’s largest societal issues. For example, the global fund for HIV-AIDS was critical to driving down the prevalence of the disease.

G7 leadership on this issue would catalyze a turning point in global mental health, especially for youth. Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau is well-suited to lead this effort during his 2018 G7 Presidency, given his long-standing commitment to mental health.

We believe that the G7 can formalize a global commitment to mental health and inspire innovation and action. This commitment could also be informed by the findings of the Lancet Commission on Global Mental Health in the Sustainable Development Goals, which will be published in April 2018 and provide a crucial backdrop for G7 action.

Now is the time for action. We continue to see loved ones suffer from mental illness, families struggle to respond, and governments fail to meet the growing needs of this community. We are therefore calling on you to focus global efforts on this devastating challenge—delivering vital support that can save lives, facilitate growth, and create a healthier, happier, more productive world.

Thank you for your consideration and leadership.

Sincerely,

The Global Coalition on Youth Mental Health

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Organizations

ACCESS Open Minds, Canada
Basic Needs, UK
California Youth Empowerment Network, US
Child Mind Institute, US
Clubhouse International, US
Community Health Assessment Team (CHAT), Singapore
Connection Coalition, US
DMAX Foundation, US
Euro Youth Mental Health CIC, Europe
Flawless Foundation, US
Game Quitters, Canada
Health Poverty Action, UK
Hope for the Day, US
iFred, US
jack.org, Canada
The Jed Foundation (JED), US
The Kennedy Forum, US
Mental Health America of California, US
Mental Health Europe, Belgium
Mental Health Worldwide, Canada
Mentally Aware Nigeria Initiative, Nigeria
Mind, Sweden
Network for Africa, UK
Project HEAL, US
Project UROK, US
Schizophrenia Society of Nova Scotia, Canada
Shine Out! Shout Out!, Canada
SHM Foundation, UK
Student Minds, UK
Teenmentalhealth.org, Canada
United Purpose, UK
WaterStone Foundation, Canada
Wellness Works, US
Youth for Mental Health Coalition, Inc., Philippines

Individuals

Dennessa Atilas, US
Rachel Beazley, Canada
Zima Creason, US
Shaun Dillon, US
Kim Duffy, US
Ben Sabic, Canada