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ALARMING NUMBER OF AMERICANS REPORT SYMPTOMS OF MENTAL ILLNESS AS A RESULT OF THE ECONOMY

Record high unemployment in Texas and Travis County lead to a mental health crisis

AUSTIN, TX. (Thursday, October 8, 2009) — Mental Health America announced today in conjunction with National Depression Screening Day that a recent national survey reveals that the economic downturn is taking a toll on the mental health of Americans. According to the survey, unemployed Americans are four times more likely than employed individuals to report symptoms of severe mental health illness.

"This survey clearly shows that economic difficulties are placing the public's mental health at serious risk, and we need affirmative action to address these medical problems," said David L. Shern, Ph.D., president and CEO of Mental Health America. "Individuals confronting these problems should seek help for their problems – talk to their doctor, trusted friend or advisor or mental health professional."

In addition, people who have taken pay cuts or had their hours reduced are more likely to report mental health issues.

"Unemployment rates are at eight percent in Texas and seven percent in Travis County," said Lynn Lasky Clark, LMSW, president and CEO of Mental Health America of Texas. "We are facing a mental health crisis in Texas. For the sake of our family and friends, it is vital that we recognize the symptoms of depression and other mental health illness and seek help."

A number of the individuals report not seeking medical help because they lack the insurance coverage. National Depression Screening Day recognizes that seeking help starts with screening. Individuals can access a free mental health screening at www.mentalhealthscreening.org

If you or someone you know is in a crisis, please call 1-800-273-TALK (8255).

The survey was conducted by Mental Health America and National Alliance on Mental Illness in collaboration with the Depression is Real Coalition. Over 1,000 Americans participated in the telephone survey.

The results of the survey are released in conjunction with Mental Illness Awareness Week, October 4-10. MIAW was established by the U.S. Congress in 1990 in recognition of the National Alliance on Mental Illness's effort to raise mental health awareness. Since then, advocates from across the country have joined together the first week in October to raise mental illness awareness.

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