



## Mental Illness - Ways Your Congregation Can Respond with Caring

The week of October 7-13, 2012 is National Mental Illness Awareness Week. Faith communities are beacons of compassion and hope and are often the first place that people turn for help. Here is a list of actions and activities your congregation can take to respond with care and compassion to persons affected by mental illness. Additional resources can be obtained from the Interfaith Community Services Resource Kit on Mental Illness, available at [www.icstucson.org](http://www.icstucson.org).

### **Increase Awareness**

- Publish a newsletter article on mental illness.
- Use the prepared ICS flyers as bulletin inserts.
- Encourage congregation members who are willing to share their story or that of a loved one dealing with mental illness. Consider a small group setting for this activity.
- Contact the local National Alliance on Mental Illness Group (NAMI) for a speaker. This group can identify a professional or an individual living with mental illness to speak on the topic ([www.namisa.org](http://www.namisa.org)).
- Become informed about local agencies that provide education and services and invite them to participate in a health fair.
- Encourage congregants to attend a Mental Health First Aid Training. Find local classes at [www.cpsa-rbha.org/mhfa/](http://www.cpsa-rbha.org/mhfa/).
- Send care ministry volunteers and staff to the Mental Illness Awareness Lunch & Learn Series kickoff for faith communities on October 11, 2012 sponsored by ICS. Call 520-297-2738 x233 for details.

### **Ideas for Worship Services and Programs**

- Consider focusing a service or program on mental illness, incorporating mental illness concerns in congregational prayers or including references to mental illness in sermons.

- Use religious language that offers hope, strength and faith rather than that which perpetuates the concepts of sin, guilt and lack of faith as the reasons for mental illness.
- Recognize the role of faith communities and clergy in influencing opinions of mental illness; work to dispel myths and alleviate fears.

### Activities to Support Congregants

- Respond with support, concern and caring to people with mental illness and their families. Listen. Be available.
- Keep in touch with congregants and/or their family members who are going through inpatient or outpatient care.
- Form a group of concerned individuals to plan mental illness activities.
- Provide space for support groups to meet.
- Host a Mental Health First Aid Training to learn how to spot symptoms, understand local resources, etc.
- Attend the Mental Illness Awareness Lunch & Learn Series kickoff on October 11, 2012 (see below). Learn what other congregations are doing and how to work together in the community.

### JOIN US!

#### Mental Illness Awareness: Becoming a Welcoming Community

Thursday, October 11, 2012 12 noon - 1:30 p.m.

Grace St. Paul's Episcopal Church, 2331 E. Adams St.

Clergy and lay faith leaders and anyone with an interest in mental illness welcome! \$10 registration includes lunch and materials. **To register, call 297-2738 x233.**

#### Key Local Mental Health Resources in Pima County, AZ:

- National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI of Southern Arizona), 520-622-5582
- Crisis Response Network, 520-622-6000
- Community Partnership of Southern Arizona--Mental Health First Aid course and behavioral health system information: 520-318-6946 (main line); 866-318-6960 (for TTY Telecommunications Device for the deaf)

#### More resources available at [www.icstucson.org](http://www.icstucson.org):

- Mental Health Resources for Faith Communities
- Pocket Guide – Mental Health & Substance Abuse Services, Pima Co. 2012
- Resources from the April 27, 2012 Mental Illness Conference in Tucson

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**INTERFAITH COMMUNITY SERVICES**

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