



**MISSOULA COUNTY LOCAL ADVISORY COUNCIL ON BEHAVIORAL HEALTH
(MLAC)**

APRIL/MAY 2026

If you want to learn more about the MLAC or if you would like to join, write to us at missoulalac@gmail.com You can also check out www.missoulalac.org and www.facebook.com/missoulalac

MAY IS MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS MONTH!

In 1949, Mental Health America designated May as “Mental Health Awareness Month”. Since then, that designation has been adopted nationwide; groups such as Mental Health America and the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) have been leaders in promoting this month as a time to advocate, to educate, and to support our family members, friends, and neighbors who struggle with mental health issues. This year, the MLAC is sponsoring two events for Mental Health Awareness Month. Both events are free and open to the public.

1. “IN OUR OWN VOICES”

SATURDAY, MAY 9, 2:00 p.m.

Missoula Public Library (Blackfoot Room, 4th Floor)

Local authors Zan Bockes and Jack Shiflett will read from their poetry and short fiction. They will also discuss how behavioral health issues have affected their work and their lives.

2. “YOUR COMMUNITY. YOUR VOICE.”

TUESDAY, MAY 12, 6:00 p.m.

Missoula

Public Library (Cooper Meeting Room, 4th Floor)

Guest Speaker: Tami Burlingame, President, NAMI Missoula

(2nd speaker TBD)

Join us to share your thoughts, questions, and concerns!



UPCOMING BEHAVIORAL HEALTH EVENTS

Saturday, May 2 (8 AM to 2 PM) **“Serve 406”** An interfaith event including worship, visits to project sites, and a Q&A lunch. RSVP to rob@serve406.org

Monday, May 4: **Tamarack Grief Resource Center** presents “SOS” (“Signs of Suicide”) at Potomac Middle School

Saturday, May 9: **MLAC** presents “In Our Own Voices” at Missoula Public Library

Tuesday, May 12: **MLAC** presents “Your Community. Your Voice.” at Missoula Public Library

Friday, May 15—Sunday, May 17: **Tamarack Grief Resource Center** offers “Women's Rendezvous,” an overnight retreat on Flathead Lake for Bereaved women.

Register:

<https://tamarackgriefresourcecenter.app.neoncrm.com/np/clients/tamarackgriefresourcecenter/event.jsp?event=5546&>

Wednesday, May 27 (5:30 PM to 7:00 PM): Open House at **Tamarack Grief Resource Center**. *“Come by, enjoy snacks, see who we are and learn what we do!”*

Date TBD: “The Gabriel Plan,” book reading and presentation by **Ginny Burton**, recovery advocate/reformer. [Ginny Burton | Change Washington](#)

IN CRISIS?



24/7 CALL, TEXT, CHAT



**SPOTLIGHT ON: MISSOULA STRATEGIC ALLIANCE
FOR IMPROVED BEHAVIORAL HEALTH AND WELL-BEING**

The Missoula Strategic Alliance for Improved Behavioral Health and Well-Being was created in 2019 to work at the systems level to address unmet behavioral health care needs of Missoula's vulnerable populations: low-income, young adult, unhoused, and those with a co-occurring substance use disorder.

The Strategic Alliance has four main objectives: 1) To collect and analyze data of current behavioral health crisis care in Missoula, 2) To research best practices from other communities, 3) To develop plans for prevention and early intervention strategies to meet the behavioral health care needs of vulnerable populations, and 4) To advocate for effective methods of funding prevention, intervention, and crisis response.

Strategic Alliance for Improved Behavioral Health Community Coalition (SABH) includes behavioral health providers, public health agencies, health care organizations, education partners, justice system service providers, housing providers, and community members. The coalition supports coordination, information sharing, and collaborative problem-solving across the behavioral health continuum.

The Alliance's Steering Committee is composed of representatives from the City of Missoula, Missoula County, Public Health Department, and regional behavioral health and health care providers. It sets direction and aligns partners in Missoula's behavioral health system; establishes shared priorities and measures; guides coordinated planning and funding strategy; and supports accountability for progress in system integration.

The Strategic Alliance is currently working on bringing the "COMPASS" program to Missoula as a new model of cross-agency coordination and cooperation intended to bring greater efficiency to the behavioral health system.

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Questions? Comments? Suggestions?

Contact: Missoula County Local Advisory Council on Behavioral Health
missoulalac@gmail.com / www.missoulalac.org /
www.facebook.com/missoulalac/



Opinion: ‘E’s’ Our Way to Better Behavioral Health Outcomes

In recent years, mental health and substance abuse issues have emerged from the shadows onto a global stage. There have been many advances in the science about what works to prevent, treat, and support recovery from mental and substance use disorders. The behavioral health field has much to celebrate. However, we would be unwise to rest on our laurels, because the job is far from done. Americans still undervalue behavioral health. Despite making great strides in such areas as raising awareness about suicide and the need for better behavioral health care for millions of Americans, major gaps remain in the nation's behavioral health safety net:

- Too many people with behavioral health conditions languish in jails and prisons when they could and should receive services in the community.*
- People with behavioral health conditions remain subject to personal and institutional discrimination, which affects their recovery, treatment, and willingness to seek help.*
- Up to half of all people with mental illness and 90% of people who meet the criteria for a substance use disorder do not get the treatment they need. This treatment gap exacts a toll on American health and economic well-being.*
- Behavioral health conditions are involved in one of every four community hospital stays; are the leading cause of hospitalization for children aged 1– 17 years; are ubiquitous in jails, prisons, and homeless shelters; and account for 15-25% of all Social Security disabled-worker beneficiaries.*

We need to engage our public health partners across the nation in improving the way Americans value behavioral health through six ‘E’s’.

- 1. We must **examine** underlying assumptions, beliefs, values, and cultural norms that prevent communities from investing in their own behavioral health and wellness.*
- 2. We must **educate** ourselves on how to influence these beliefs and behaviors.*
- 3. We must **enlist** the public in changing social norms around mental illness and substance misuse.*
- 4. We must **employ** the best prevention, treatment, and recovery support services based on scientific evidence and the rich experiences of our diverse communities.*
- 5. We must **evaluate** the needs of the population and the outcomes of our programs.*
- 6. We must **engage** individuals, families, schools, businesses, and others to ensure that all Americans receive the support they need for optimum behavioral health.*

(From “What is behavioral health worth?” by Pamela Hyde and Kana Enomoto)