

Toolkit for Establishing and Maintaining Community Partnerships for Mental Health Information Outreach



Purpose

This toolkit provides practical guidance for individuals and organizations to identify, establish, and maintain effective community partnerships to address mental health issues by improving awareness and access to mental health information. Community-wide mental health information initiatives can be effectively promoted by engaging key community members, building trust, and fostering collaboration. This guide includes strategies for partnership building, community member engagement, and sustainable development of mental health information resources, ensuring that all community members have access to the support they need.

This guide provides concise steps for identifying and collaborating with potential community partners to support mental health initiatives. Effective partnerships enhance resource availability, improve community outreach, and foster sustainable mental health support networks.

The goal of this program is to help people find the information they need by providing access to reliable, evidence-based resources. This program does not offer medical advice or provider recommendations.

Identify Key Community Members and Partners

Identifying and engaging the right community members and partners is crucial for developing effective mental health information initiatives. A successful partnership starts with understanding who can contribute valuable insights, resources, and support to address the community's mental health needs. When targeting specific audiences, involving them directly in the planning and decision-making process is essential. The "Nothing about us without us" principle underscores the importance of including and listening to those directly affected in every initiative step. This ensures the services and programs developed are relevant, accessible, and effective.

Potential Partners

- **Reach Out to Local Mental Health Organizations:** Collaborate with local chapters of NAMI, mental health advocacy groups, and community mental health centers. These organizations often have resources you can utilize and have direct access to individuals and families who would benefit from mental health information initiatives and can provide critical insight into community needs.
- **Connect with Public Libraries:** Utilize public libraries as community hubs that offer programs and resources. Libraries can also provide valuable space for meetings, workshops, and support groups and help reach a broader audience. Public libraries provide access to electronic information resources on mental health issues.
- **Engage Schools and Universities:** Partner with educational institutions to support youth mental health. Work directly with school counselors, psychologists, and university health services to address the mental health needs of students, particularly when focusing on specific groups such as adolescents or young adults.
- **Collaborate with Healthcare Providers:** Healthcare providers, including local clinics and hospitals, are key partners in mental health information initiatives. They can provide referrals and serve as credible sources of information and support for both the general community and targeted populations.
- **Involve Faith-Based Organizations:** Engage faith-based organizations to reach diverse populations, especially if targeting specific cultural or religious groups. These organizations are trusted community members and can help reduce stigma and encourage participation in mental health information programs.
- **Work with Community Groups and Nonprofits:** Partner with groups serving specific populations (e.g., veterans, LGBTQIA+ communities, immigrant groups) to ensure culturally sensitive support. By engaging these groups, you can better understand and address the unique information needs of different community members.
- **Collaborate with Local Businesses and Employers:** Involve local businesses in your initiatives, particularly if targeting workplace mental health information. Employers can provide resources, training, and a supportive environment for mental health programs.

- **Engaging Specific Audiences:** If you are targeting a specific audience (e.g., youth, seniors, veterans, LGBTQIA+ individuals), it's crucial to connect with representatives from these groups directly. Host focus groups, community meetings, or one-on-one interviews to gather input and ensure their voices are included in the planning process. By embracing the "Nothing about us without us" approach, you ensure that the mental health programs are genuinely inclusive and responsive to the needs of those most affected.

Engage Key Community Members and Build Trust

Effectively engaging key community members is crucial to the success of any mental health partnership. Building trust and fostering open communication among all parties lays the foundation for a strong, collaborative effort. It ensures that mental health initiatives are relevant, inclusive, and responsive to the community's needs. This section provides practical strategies for engaging community members, gathering meaningful input, and fostering an environment of trust and cooperation.

Strategies for Engaging Community Members

Conduct Community Assessments:

Begin by understanding the specific mental health information needs of your community. Utilize tools such as Health Impact Assessments (HIAs) and community surveys to gather data on local mental health information challenges, resources, and gaps. Engaging community members in the assessment process ensures that their experiences and perspectives are included from the outset. This collaborative approach helps identify priority areas and empowers community members by involving them in the decision-making process.

Key Actions:

- **Locate existing surveys and data** on community mental health, such as community health assessments, community health needs assessments or health improvement plans. The local health departments, hospitals, or health providers often conduct these.
- **Analyze data** to identify trends, needs, and potential areas for intervention.
- **If you cannot locate these or they do not provide the information you need.**

You can:

- Organize community focus groups to discuss mental health needs and collect qualitative data.
- Conduct surveys and questionnaires targeting diverse community demographics to gather broad-based input.

Promote Transparency and Inclusivity:

Transparency in planning, decision-making, and implementation processes is essential for building trust with community members. Ensure all actions and decisions are communicated openly and that community voices are central to every step of the initiative. Inclusivity is more than inviting community members to participate. It requires you to ensure that their input has a tangible impact on the outcome of the initiatives.

Key Actions:

- Share progress reports, meeting minutes, and decision-making criteria with all community partners and participants.
- Establish a community advisory board that includes representatives from diverse community groups to provide oversight and guidance.
- Encourage open dialogue and provide multiple platforms for community members to express their concerns, suggestions, and support.



Build Trust Through Continuous Engagement:

Establish Mutual Goals and Objectives:

Clearly define the shared goals and objectives of the mental health information initiatives. This establishes a common purpose and aligns the efforts of all partners and community members. When everyone understands what they are working toward, it fosters a sense of unity and collective ownership.

Recognize and Address Power Dynamics:

Be aware of power dynamics that may exist among partners and within the community. Ensure that all voices, especially those from marginalized or underrepresented groups, are heard and valued equally. Adopting the principle of "Nothing about us without us" helps to mitigate these dynamics and ensure that the initiatives are inclusive and equitable.

By engaging key community members and building trust through transparent communication, inclusivity, and continuous engagement, mental health information initiatives can be more effectively tailored to meet the community's unique needs. This collaborative approach strengthens the partnership and enhances the overall impact of mental health information efforts, ensuring they are sustainable and supported by the community they aim to serve.

Foster Collaboration and Partnership Building

Fostering collaboration among diverse partners is essential for creating a coordinated and comprehensive approach to mental health in the community. By building a collaborative structure, leveraging existing networks, and encouraging cross-sector partnerships, communities can maximize resources and enhance the overall impact of mental health initiatives. Effective collaboration ensures that mental health programs are sustainable, inclusive, and responsive to the needs of all community members.



Strategies for Building Effective Collaboration

Create a Collaborative Structure

A structured and organized approach to collaboration is vital for the success of any community initiative. Forming a steering committee or coalition with representatives from each partner organization is a practical way to establish a collaborative structure. This group should include key community members such as local health departments, mental health professionals, community leaders, libraries, and representatives from schools, nonprofits, and faith-based organizations. The steering committee will guide the planning, implementation, and evaluation of mental health information initiatives, ensuring all partners are aligned and working towards common goals.

Key Actions:

- **Define Clear Roles and Responsibilities:** Clearly outline the roles and responsibilities of each partner organization and committee member. This helps avoid duplication of efforts and ensures accountability.
- **Establish Regular Meetings:** Schedule regular meetings to discuss progress, address challenges, and make decisions collaboratively. These meetings should provide a platform for open dialogue and shared decision-making.
- **Develop a Shared Vision and Goals:** Work with all partners to develop a shared vision and set of goals for the mental health initiative. This helps align efforts and ensures that all activities contribute to the broader objectives.

Leverage Existing Networks

Building on established relationships and networks can significantly enhance the effectiveness of mental health initiatives. Existing networks, such as local mental health coalitions, provide a strong foundation for collaboration. By leveraging these networks, organizations can tap into a wealth of knowledge, resources, and expertise, making coordinating efforts easier and maximizing impact.

Key Actions:

- **Identify Key Partners in Existing Networks:** Conduct a mapping exercise to identify potential partners within existing networks who can contribute to mental health initiatives. This could include healthcare providers, social service agencies, educational institutions, and community groups.
- **Engage in Joint Planning and Resource Sharing:** Work with network partners to develop joint plans and share resources, such as funding, facilities, and expertise. This collaborative approach helps reduce costs and increases the reach and effectiveness of programs.

Implement Cross-Sector Collaborations

Encouraging cross-sector collaborations is crucial for addressing the multifaceted nature of mental health issues. Partnerships between public libraries, health organizations, local governments, and community groups can create a broad support network for mental health information initiatives. Cross-sector collaborations bring together diverse perspectives and resources, enabling more holistic and comprehensive approaches to mental health.

Key Actions:

- **Develop Integrated Service Models:** Work with partners from different sectors to develop integrated service models that combine mental health information with other social supports, such as housing, employment, and education. This approach addresses the social determinants of mental health and improves overall well-being.
- **Coordinate Outreach and Engagement Efforts:** Collaborate on outreach and engagement efforts to raise awareness about mental health information resources and services. Joint campaigns and events can reach a wider audience and foster a culture of support and inclusion.
- **Establish Data-Sharing Agreements:** Develop data-sharing agreements with partners to facilitate the exchange of information and improve service delivery. Data sharing helps track progress, identify gaps in services, and ensure that interventions are evidence-based and effective.

Sustaining Collaborative Efforts Over Time

- **Ensure Ongoing Communication and Engagement:** Sustaining partnerships requires continuous communication and engagement. Regular updates, meetings, and opportunities for feedback help maintain momentum and ensure that all partners remain committed to the initiative. Create communication channels allowing easy and transparent information sharing among all partners.
- **Celebrate Achievements and Recognize Contributions:** Recognizing partners' contributions and celebrating achievements is essential for maintaining morale and commitment. Host regular events to acknowledge the successes of the partnership and the positive impact on the community. Public recognition of partners' efforts can also enhance their reputation and encourage continued support.
- **Seek Joint Funding and Resources:** Collaborative efforts are more sustainable when partners work together to secure funding and resources. Explore joint grant opportunities, pooled funding arrangements, and in-kind contributions to support the long-term sustainability of mental health information initiatives. Collaborative funding strategies can help mitigate financial constraints and ensure that programs continue to thrive.
- **Evaluate and Adapt Collaborative Efforts:** Regularly evaluate the effectiveness of the collaboration and make necessary adjustments to improve outcomes. Use feedback from partners and community members to identify areas for improvement and adapt strategies as needed. Continuous evaluation and adaptation ensure the partnership remains dynamic and responsive to changing needs.

By fostering collaboration and building strong partnerships, communities can create a coordinated and comprehensive approach to mental health. Effective collaboration not only maximizes resources and enhances the impact of mental health information initiatives but also ensures that these efforts are sustainable and aligned with the needs of the community. Through structured collaboration, leveraging networks, and encouraging cross-sector partnerships, communities can build a robust support system for mental health that is inclusive, effective, and enduring.



Develop and Implement Strategies

To effectively address mental health issues within a community, it is crucial to develop targeted strategies that focus on key areas of need. This involves identifying specific gaps in mental health services, promoting communication strategies that are inclusive and equity-centered, and utilizing public spaces to reach diverse audiences. By implementing thoughtful and inclusive strategies, partnerships can work towards improving mental health outcomes for all community members. The following sections outline how to identify priority areas, engage in equity-centered health communication, and leverage community spaces for outreach.



Key Strategies

Focus on Key Areas of Need:

Identifying and prioritizing key areas of need is the first step in developing effective mental health initiatives. Communities often face unique mental health challenges, such as a lack of crisis intervention services, insufficient support for youth mental health, or gaps in services for underserved populations like immigrants or LGBTQ+ individuals. By using the information you gather assessment and gathering input from community members, partnerships can identify these gaps and prioritize initiatives that address them.

Key Actions:

- **Conduct a Community Needs Assessment:** Utilize surveys, focus groups, and data analysis to identify specific mental health needs and service gaps in the community. Engage a diverse group of community members to ensure a comprehensive understanding of local challenges.
- **Prioritize High-Impact Initiatives:** Based on the needs assessment, prioritize initiatives that are likely to have the most significant impact. This could include expanding access to crisis intervention services, developing targeted programs for youth, or creating specialized support groups for marginalized populations.
- **Develop Action Plans:** Create detailed action plans for each prioritized initiative, outlining specific goals, timelines, resources, and responsibilities. Ensure that all plans are aligned with the broader objectives of improving community mental health.

Promote Equity-Centered Health Communication

Effective communication is critical to the success of any mental health initiative. To promote equity-centered health communication, it is essential to ensure that all messages are inclusive, culturally sensitive, and designed to reduce stigma around mental health. This approach not only enhances the effectiveness of communication efforts but also fosters a more supportive and inclusive community environment.

Key Actions:

- **Create Inclusive Messaging:** Develop communication materials that reflect the diversity of the community. Use language that is respectful and inclusive, and avoid jargon or medical terminology that may not be accessible to all audiences.
- **Utilize Multiple Communication Channels:** Reach diverse community members by using a variety of communication channels, including social media, local radio, community newspapers, and public service announcements. Tailor messages to different platforms to maximize reach and engagement.
- **Engage Community Voices in Messaging:** Involve community members, especially those from underserved or marginalized groups, in the creation and dissemination of communication materials. This ensures that messages resonate with the intended audiences and are culturally appropriate.

Utilize Public Spaces for Outreach

Public spaces, such as libraries, community centers, schools, and parks, offer valuable opportunities for outreach and engagement. These venues are often trusted by community members and can serve as accessible sites for providing mental health education, hosting workshops, and delivering support services.

Key Actions

- **Host Community Events:** Organize events in public spaces to raise awareness about mental health, provide education, and connect community members with local resources. Examples include mental health fairs, support group meetings, and informational workshops.
- **Collaborate with Public Institutions:** Work with local libraries, schools, and community centers to develop and deliver mental health programming. These institutions often have established relationships with community members and can help facilitate engagement.
- **Promote Resource Availability in Public Spaces:** Ensure that mental health resources, such as brochures, flyers, and referral information, are readily available in public venues. Consider setting up dedicated information kiosks or resource tables in high-traffic areas to increase visibility.

Sustaining Mental Health Initiative

- **Build Community Capacity:** Empower community members by providing training and education on mental health topics. Building community capacity ensures that more people are equipped to support mental health initiatives and provide peer support.
- **Foster Ongoing Partnerships:** Maintain and strengthen partnerships with local organizations, healthcare providers, schools, and other stakeholders. Regular communication and collaboration help sustain momentum and ensure that mental health initiatives are well-coordinated and effective.
- **Evaluate and Adapt Initiatives:** Regularly evaluate the impact of mental health initiatives and use feedback to make necessary adjustments. This iterative process ensures that programs remain relevant, effective, and responsive to the community's changing needs.



By focusing on key areas of need, promoting equity-centered communication, and leveraging public spaces for outreach, community partnerships can develop and implement effective mental health strategies. These initiatives should be sustained through ongoing evaluation, community engagement, and strong partnerships, ensuring that all community members' mental health outcomes are continuously improved.

Communications Framework

This framework is designed to help organizations develop clear, concise, and effective communication strategies tailored to different community groups involved in mental health initiatives. Effective communication is essential for raising awareness, fostering engagement, encouraging collaboration, and ensuring the success of mental health programs. By following this guide, community partners can create targeted messages that resonate with their audiences, promote mental health resources, and support community-wide mental health efforts.



Identify Your Target Audiences

Understanding your target audience is the first step in developing effective communication strategies. Different groups have varying needs, interests, and levels of understanding regarding mental health. Identifying and analyzing these groups allows organizations to tailor messages that are relevant, engaging, and impactful.

Audience Segments

Community Members: Individuals and families who may benefit from mental health services or wish to support mental health initiatives. This group includes diverse demographics such as youth, seniors, veterans, LGBTQ+ individuals, and minority communities. Messages should inform, support, and empower these individuals by providing accessible and relevant mental health information and resources.

Local Organizations and Partners: Community-based organizations, healthcare providers, schools, nonprofits, faith-based groups, and businesses collaborating on mental health initiatives. Messages should emphasize the benefits of partnership, shared goals, and collaborative efforts to improve community mental health.

Funders: Donors, grant providers, local government bodies, and foundations that provide financial or in-kind support for mental health programs. Communication should focus on the impact of their support, sustainability, and the broader benefits to the community.

Media Outlets: Local newspapers, radio stations, television networks, online platforms, and bloggers who can help disseminate information and raise awareness about mental health initiatives. Engaging the media effectively can amplify messaging and reach a wider audience.

Develop Key Messages for Each Audience

Key messages are the core points you want each audience to understand and remember. They should be clear, concise, compelling, and tailored to the specific interests and needs of each group. The messages should also align with the organization's overall objectives and goals for the mental health initiative.

Crafting Key Messages

For Community Members:

- *Message Focus:* Awareness, Accessibility, and Empowerment
- *Key Messages:*
 - "Mental health support is available to everyone. Learn about mental health information sources, local resources and services available to you."
 - "Join our free workshops to learn coping strategies and connect with others who understand."
- *Call to Action:* Access resources, attend events, and participate in support groups.

For Local Organizations and Partners

- *Message Focus:* Collaboration, Mutual Benefit, and Community Impact
- *Key Messages:*
 - "Let's work together to improve access to mental health information, expand mental health services and support in our community."
 - "Join us in building a stronger, healthier community by addressing mental health needs together."
- *Call to Action:* Collaborate on programs, share resources, and participate in joint planning efforts.

For Funders:

- *Message Focus:* Impact, Sustainability, and Community Benefit
- *Key Messages:*
 - "Your funding helps us improve access to crucial mental health information and provide critical mental health services to those in need."
 - "Support our mental health initiatives to create lasting, positive change in our community."
- *Call to Action:* Provide funding, offer grants, and support specific projects or initiatives.

For Media Outlets:

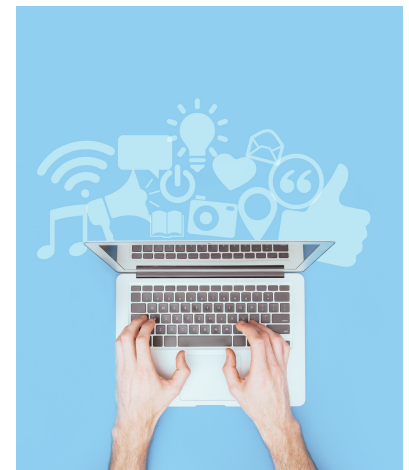
- *Message Focus:* Public Awareness, Engagement, and Advocacy
- *Key Messages:*
 - "Help us raise awareness about mental health resources available in our community."
 - "Highlight local efforts to support mental health and well-being."
- *Call to Action:* Publish stories, feature interviews, broadcast public service announcements.

Choose Appropriate Communication Channels

Selecting the right communication channels is essential to ensure your messages reach the intended audience effectively. Different audiences may prefer different communication methods, so using a mix of channels can maximize outreach and engagement.

Channel Selection:

- **Print Materials:** Use flyers, brochures, and posters to reach community members who frequent public spaces such as community centers, healthcare facilities, schools, and workplaces. Print materials are effective for providing tangible information that can be easily shared and referenced.
- **Digital Platforms:** Utilize social media (Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, Threads, BlueSky, etc.), email newsletters, and websites to reach a broader audience, including tech-savvy individuals and younger demographics. Digital platforms allow for dynamic, interactive, and timely communication that can be easily updated and shared.
- **Events and Workshops:** Organize in-person or virtual events, such as mental health fairs, workshops, and support groups, to engage directly with community members, partners, and stakeholders. Events provide an opportunity for real-time interaction, feedback, and community building.
- **Media Outreach:** Engage local media outlets by developing press releases, op-eds, and feature stories. Media coverage can raise public awareness, legitimize initiatives, and reach audiences who may not be engaged through other channels.
- **Direct Outreach:** Utilize phone calls, SMS, and direct mail for personalized communication, especially with key community members, partners, and funders. Direct outreach can be more effective for building relationships and securing commitments.



Ensure Consistent and Inclusive Messaging

Consistency and inclusivity are critical for effective communication. Messages should be aligned across all channels and formats to reinforce key points and create a cohesive narrative. Additionally, communication should be inclusive and accessible to all community members.

Key Considerations:

- **Clear and Simple Language:** Use plain language that is free of jargon and easily understood by all audiences. Ensure that messages are direct, clear, and to the point to avoid confusion or misinterpretation.
- **Visuals and Personal Stories:** Incorporate visuals, such as images, infographics, and videos, to make messages more engaging and memorable. Personal stories and testimonials can help humanize mental health issues and resonate emotionally with the audience.
- **Inclusive Content:** Ensure that all messages reflect the diversity of the community. Use inclusive language, consider cultural nuances, and provide materials in multiple languages and accessible formats (e.g., braille, large print, audio).
- **Feedback and Adaptation:** Encourage feedback from your audiences to understand their needs better and refine your messaging. Be prepared to adapt communication strategies based on feedback and changing circumstances.

Evaluate and Adapt Communication Efforts

Regular evaluation is essential to assess the effectiveness of communication strategies and make necessary adjustments. Continuous improvement ensures that messaging remains relevant, impactful, and aligned with community needs.

Evaluation Strategies:

- **Feedback and Surveys:** Use surveys, polls, and feedback forms to gather input from community members, partners, and stakeholders. Understand what messages are resonating and where there may be gaps.
- **Social Media Analytics:** Track engagement metrics on social media platforms, such as likes, shares, comments, and reach. Analyze these metrics to determine the effectiveness of digital communication efforts.
- **Website and Email Metrics:** Monitor website traffic, page views, and email open rates to gauge the interest and engagement levels of your audience. Use these insights to refine content and improve user experience.
- **Direct Feedback from Events:** Collect feedback during and after events to understand participant experiences and identify areas for improvement. This feedback can help enhance future event planning and execution.

- **Adjust Strategies:** Based on the data collected, refine messages, choose different channels, or alter the frequency of communications to better meet the needs and preferences of your audience.

This communications guide framework provides a structured approach to developing clear, concise, and effective messages tailored to various community groups. By understanding your audience, crafting targeted messages, choosing appropriate channels, ensuring consistency and inclusivity, and regularly evaluating efforts, organizations can enhance engagement, build partnerships, and support successful mental health initiatives within the community.

Evaluate and Sustain Partnerships

Sustaining community partnerships for mental health initiatives requires a proactive approach to ensure they remain effective and relevant over time. Continuous evaluation, sharing success stories, and securing sustainable funding are crucial components in maintaining and strengthening these partnerships. By focusing on sustainability, organizations can ensure that their collaborative efforts continue to provide valuable mental health support to the community for the long term. This section outlines key strategies for evaluating and sustaining partnerships, highlighting the tools and resources needed to achieve these goals.

Continuous Evaluation

Regular evaluation of both the partnership and the initiatives it supports is essential for sustained success. Evaluation helps identify what is working well and what needs improvement, allowing partners to make informed decisions and necessary adjustments. This process should be ongoing and involve all partners to foster a sense of shared ownership and accountability.

Key Actions:

- **Conduct Regular Surveys and Assessments:** Utilize surveys, interviews, and focus groups to gather feedback from community members, partners, and stakeholders. Assess both the outcomes of mental health initiatives and the effectiveness of the partnership itself.
- **Analyze Data to Identify Trends and Gaps:** Use data collected from evaluations to identify trends, strengths, and areas for improvement. Data-driven insights help refine strategies and ensure resources are allocated effectively.
- **Implement a Feedback Loop:** Create a system where feedback is regularly collected, analyzed, and discussed among partners. This helps ensure that evaluation findings lead to actionable improvements and adjustments.

Promote Success Stories

Sharing positive outcomes and success stories is a powerful way to maintain engagement and support from the community and stakeholders. Highlighting successes helps build trust, demonstrate impact, and sustain momentum for ongoing initiatives. It also provides an opportunity to recognize the contributions of partners and community members, fostering a sense of pride and ownership.



Key Actions:

- **Develop Case Studies and Testimonials:** Create compelling case studies and testimonials that showcase the impact of mental health initiatives. Use real stories from community members who have benefited from the programs to illustrate the value of the partnership.
- **Utilize Multiple Platforms for Sharing:** Share success stories across various platforms, including social media, newsletters, community events, and local media. Tailor the messaging to different audiences to maximize reach and engagement.
- **Celebrate Milestones and Achievements:** Host events or gatherings to celebrate significant milestones and achievements. Recognizing the hard work and contributions of partners and community members helps reinforce commitment and encourage continued collaboration.

Seek Sustainable Funding and Resources

Securing sustainable funding is critical for the long-term success of mental health initiatives. Identifying diverse funding sources, including grants, local government support, and community fundraising, ensures that programs can continue without interruption. Sustainable funding strategies should be a collaborative effort among all partners to maximize resources and share the financial burden.

Key Actions:

- **Identify and Apply for Grants:** Research and apply for grants from government agencies, foundations, and private donors that support mental health initiatives. Develop a calendar of grant opportunities and deadlines to ensure timely applications.
- **Engage in Community Fundraising:** Organize community fundraising events and campaigns to raise awareness and funds for mental health programs. This could include charity walks, online crowdfunding, or community benefit events.
- **Establish In-Kind Partnerships:** Develop partnerships with local businesses and organizations that can provide in-kind support, such as meeting spaces, promotional materials, or volunteer time. In-kind contributions can reduce costs and enhance the reach of mental health initiatives.

Practical Tools and Resources

Equipping community partners with practical tools and resources is essential for the successful implementation and sustainability of mental health initiatives. Providing accessible, easy-to-use resources helps build the capacity of partners and empowers them to effectively respond to the mental health needs of their communities. This section provides a range of practical tools and resources designed to support community engagement, education, and service delivery.

Utilizing comprehensive resource toolkits can enhance community engagement and partnership strategies. Toolkits like the "Engaging Your Community Toolkit" provide valuable guidance on organizing community events, developing outreach strategies, and building effective partnerships.

Key Actions:

- **Distribute Toolkits to Partners:** Ensure that all partners have access to resource toolkits that provide guidance on best practices for community engagement and mental health advocacy.
- **Customize Toolkits for Specific Needs:** Tailor toolkits to address the specific needs and priorities of different community groups, ensuring that all partners have relevant and useful resources.
- **Regularly Update Toolkits:** Keep resource toolkits up-to-date with the latest information, research, and best practices. Regular updates ensure that partners are equipped with current knowledge and tools.

By regularly evaluating partnerships, celebrating successes, and seeking sustainable funding, community mental health initiatives can be sustained and strengthened over time. Equipping partners with practical tools and resources further enhances their ability to deliver effective mental health support. Through continuous improvement and adaptation, partnerships can remain effective, responsive, and impactful, ensuring that mental health needs are met within the community for years to come.



Conclusion

Building and maintaining effective community partnerships for mental health requires a comprehensive approach that includes identifying key stakeholders, fostering collaboration, developing targeted strategies, and sustaining efforts over time. By following the steps outlined in this toolkit and leveraging available resources, individuals and organizations can create meaningful partnerships that improve mental health outcomes in their communities. This toolkit encourages collaboration, inclusivity, and continuous evaluation to promote sustainable community-wide mental health initiatives.

By following this structure, organizations can create a strong foundation for effective and lasting partnerships that address mental health needs in their communities.

Access the full Mental Health Information Community Partnerships Toolkit
<https://www.nlm.gov/guides/mental-health-information-community-partnerships-toolkit>

NNLM R6 State of Iowa Advisory Committee Members

Abby Less
Community Health Consultant,
Iowa Department of Public Health, Office of Health
Care Transformation

Angie Doyle Scar
Executive Officer
Office of Healthcare Transformation
Iowa Department of Public health

Becky Heil
District Consultant
State Library of Iowa

Cynthia J Fiester
Chronic Disease Coordinator/Registered Nurse
Linn County Public Health (LCPH), Cedar Rapids

Gina Schlesselman-Tarango
Science Librarian
Grinnell College

Jennie Ver Steeg
Director of Library and Media Services
Mercy College of Health Sciences and MercyOne,
Des Moines

Lisa Johnson
Director
Orange City Library

Mara Strickler
Director
Pella Public Library

Riley Samuelson
Education & Outreach Librarian
University of Iowa

Sam Helmick
Community and Access Services Coordinator
Iowa City Public Library

Staci Stanton
Programming and Outreach Manager
Urbandale Public Library

Tyler Hahn
Director
Cherokee Public Library

Bobbi L. Newman
Community Engagement & Outreach Specialist
NNLM Region 6