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Mental Illness Isn't Just Depression: Raising Awareness of Eating Disorders
National Eating Disorders Awareness Week is Feb. 22 – Feb. 28

SPRINGFIELD, OH (Feb. 23, 2021) – Mental Health Recovery Board of Clark, Greene & Madison Counties (MHRB) is inviting “Every Body to Have a Seat at the Table” during National Eating Disorders Awareness Week (also known as NEDAwareness Week). NEDAwareness Week 2021 is February 22 through February 28. Most of us have concerns about our weight from time to time, but people with eating disorders develop an extreme condition which threatens their wellbeing, health, and daily life.

“MHRB provides pathways to care for everybody and every family in Clark, Greene & Madison Counties—for all sorts of mental health and substance use concerns,” said Dr. Greta Mayer, CEO of MHRB. “While many people are aware of problems like anxiety or depression, less is known locally about eating disorders—and about who they impact. Educating ourselves and each other about eating disorders and their impact will help us address those gaps.”

In the United States, national surveys indicate that 10 million men and 20 million women will experience an eating disorder at some point in their lives.

In Clark County, 29.8% of middle school students self-describe as slightly or very overweight, according to the 2019 Youth Risk Behavior Survey conducted by the Clark County Combined Health District. The same survey, based on data from 2,846 students across 11 middle schools, indicated that only 20.8% of middle school students were not trying to change their weight. Data collected from 5,787 students at 13 Clark County high schools were similar; 33.1% self-identified as slightly or very overweight and 17.5% indicated that they were not trying to change their weight.

Results from the 2018-2019 Ohio Health Youth Environments Survey (OHYES!) of 1,168 Madison County youths aged 12-18 or older indicated that 43.15% of participants were trying to lose weight, and only 25.95% were not trying to do anything about their weight.

In the 2017-2018 Ohio Health Youth Environments Survey (OHYES!) of 956 Greene County youths aged 13-18 or older, 46.37% of participants indicated they were trying to lose weight, and only 21.02% indicated that they were not trying to do anything about their weight.

Eating disorders are linked with other problems like depression, anxiety and substance disorders, all of which need to be addressed by a licensed professional. Treatment is effective, especially

when trained physical and mental health professionals work together. The results will take time and often family members are an essential ingredient for successful treatment.

Eating disorders commonly are viewed as a problem that affects only young, White women, despite evidence that Black, indigenous and people of color (BIPOC) and LGBTQ+ youth experience eating disorders at the same rate, if not more often. Recent focus groups conducted by MHRB reflected these trends, as eating disorders were identified as an area of concern for Black communities.

“National studies show that Black and Hispanic teens are more likely to exhibit certain disordered eating habits than their White counterparts. One in 4 people with anorexia nervosa are men. In fact, subclinical eating disordered behaviors are nearly as common among males as females,” said Mayer. “Recognizing that eating disorders affect people across all identities can help improve diagnoses, treatment options and pathways to care for everyone, but especially for marginalized communities facing barriers to medical and mental health care.”

MHRB will be sharing information about eating disorders and support resources on its Facebook page throughout NEDAwareness Week and encourages residents to share the messages within their communities. Community members and organizations interested in learning more about eating disorders can access research, statistics and social media toolkits from the National Eating Disorders Association website at www.nationaleatingdisorders.org.

Anyone seeking support or treatment for mental health disorders including eating disorders can find a directory of care providers on MHRB’s website at www.mhrb.org/find-help.

ABOUT MHRB

Mental Health Recovery Board of Clark, Greene & Madison Counties (MHRB) assists partners, stakeholders, residents, and anyone at risk of mental health or substance use concerns in our three-county area, providing pathways to mental health and addiction services. In collaboration with more than 20 contract care providers, the board advocates for the mental health needs and facilitates delivery of quality care for all ages, regardless of income or ability to pay.

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