



## DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

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### **Wear Green on Fridays and Display Green Throughout May to Celebrate and Support Mental Health Month!**

HONOLULU – May is Mental Health Month! The Hawai'i State Department of Health (DOH), Child & Adolescent Mental Health Division (CAMHD), Adult Mental Health Division (AMHD), the Children's Mental Health Acceptance (CMHA) Hui, and our community partners encourage Hawai'i residents to move beyond the term awareness and redefine mental health to foster [acceptance](#) and end prejudice and discrimination. Acceptance demands we advocate and act to change attitudes, behaviors, and systems.

Bias and discrimination toward individuals experiencing mental health challenges create barriers to seeking treatment. Talking about mental health destigmatizes people's views and increases the likelihood those who are struggling will seek help and accept resources, services, and support. Mental health is an important public health issue we should discuss with our youth, as a family, and in our communities.

Green is the national color of mental health acceptance, representing hope, strength, support, and encouragement for people who live with mental illness. Show support and recognition of [Mental Health Month](#) by:

- Wearing something green at least once a week throughout May
- Displaying green by, for example, adding an image of a green ribbon, changing the color of your email signature text, adding a green hashtag to your email signature block, and
- Using virtual backgrounds with a mental health or a green theme.

To view the calendar of statewide events and take part in our social media challenges, visit <https://health.hawaii.gov/camhd/cmha23/>.

[A kick-off event is scheduled for May 1st at the Hawai'i State Capitol!](#) Join this public event to learn about youth and adult mental health promotion and prevention activities, support services, treatment options, and community advocacy initiatives.

The following buildings will display green lights in support of mental health:

**O'ahu:**

- **May 1-31:** Adventist Health Castle, Aloha Tower, Blaisdell Center Arena, Board of Water Supply, Hawai'i State Capitol, Hawaiki Tower, HMSA, Pali Momi Medical Center and Windward Mall
- **May 15-19:** IBM Building (Kaka'ako)
- **May 22-26:** Nalu Lani Plaza (Kaka'ako)

**Kaua'i:**

- **May 8-12:** Līhu'e Civic Center and Wilcox Medical Center

[Mental Health Month](#) encourages a national dialogue about caring for our [mental health](#), which is a public health issue for all ages:

- One in five [youth](#) has a mental, emotional, developmental, or behavioral disorder;
- One in five [adults](#) lives with a mental illness; and
- One in five [older adults](#) ages 55 years or older experiences a mental health concern.

“In the wake of the pandemic, children’s mental health acceptance has never been more important,” said Keli Acquaro, acting administrator for the DOH Child & Adolescent Mental Health Division (CAMHD). “The good news is that youth are incredibly resilient. A critical protective factor for our keiki is that they feel connected at home and at school, and the way to achieve that is through strong relationships with adults and peers. We can all do our part by showing the young people in our lives that we care.”

Key findings from the [2021 Hawai'i Youth Risk Behavior Survey](#) revealed prevalence rates for the following indicators:

- More than half of public school students (54% of middle school and 56% of high school students) never or rarely got the help they needed (among students who reported having felt sad, empty, hopeless, angry, or anxious).
- Of public middle school students, 34% have felt sad or hopeless almost every day for two or more weeks in a row so that they stopped doing some usual activities and 27% have seriously thought about killing themselves.
- Of public high school students, in the past 12 months, 35% felt sad or hopeless almost every day for two or more weeks in a row so that they stopped doing some usual activities and 17% have seriously considered attempting suicide.

Dr. Amy B. Curtis, administrator for the DOH Adult Mental Health Division (AMHD) noted that, “Hawai'i residents experiencing a behavioral health or substance use crisis, having thoughts of suicide or anxiety, wanting mental health or emotional support, looking for recovery resources for substance use, or who are friends or family members of someone in need of help may contact Hawai'i CARES 988” to connect with a locally trained counselor who can help with linkage to behavioral health crisis or substance use treatment services.

The [2021 National Survey on Drug Use and Health \(NSDUH\)](#) highlighted the following relating to “Mental Health among Adults” and “Perceived Effects of the COVID-19 Pandemic.”

Mental Health among Adults:

- Among adults aged eighteen (18) or older, 22.8% (57.8 million out of 253.8 million adults) had any mental illness (AMI) in the past year.
- Among adults aged eighteen (18) or older 5.5% (14.1 million out of 253.8 million adults) had a serious mental illness (SMI) in the past year.

Perceived Effects of the COVID-19 Pandemic:

- Nearly half of adults (48.9% or 6.8 million out of 13.9 million adults) aged eighteen (18) or older living with a serious mental illness (SMI) in the past year perceived a negative impact of COVID-19 on their mental health.

Individuals needing crisis, mental health, and substance use support services can call, text, or chat 988 for the [Hawai'i CARES 988](#) free 24/7 call center; or contact the [Crisis Text Line](#) by texting ALOHA to 741741. If you are in an emergency or if you fear you are in danger, please call or text [911](#) or go to the nearest emergency room. For more information about children's mental health services, visit <https://health.hawaii.gov/camhd/>. For more information about adult mental health services, visit <https://health.hawaii.gov/amhd/>.



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