

**29th Annual National Conference
December 2–3, 2020 | Virtual Experience
Responses to Questions Submitted via Conference Platform**

**Behavioral Health: The Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic
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Question one: Why aren't these behavioral health statistics presented beside the COVID-19 statistics by the media?

Answer:

MHA has been releasing monthly updates, and broadcast media have picked up on them throughout the year. But they are not using them as tracking numbers or reporting them regularly. We think this is because they still do not fully see or comprehend how big the mental health crisis is that is accompanying the pandemic.

Question two: Do rural populations present any unique challenges?

Answer:

They do, because coming into the pandemic many rural areas had no mental health providers. Getting new services out to less populated areas can also be harder. However, the loneliness and isolation people are feeling seems to be consistent across rural, suburban, and urban areas.

Question three: Given the limitations in interactions related to the pandemic, how do we improve our ability to reach people who might not actively access the mental health system?

Answer:

Our screening population is help-seeking, so we take that as a given. However, even randomized surveys of people suggest that what we're seeing in the help-seeking population is what the general population is experiencing. When we ask people who haven't been in the system before what they most want, they usually tell us more information about mental health and the condition for which they've screened, and do-it-yourself tools. So, we think we can start there with the general population, too. And use the information and tools to lead people to peer and professional resources when they are ready to access them.

Question four: Do you see more college students going into and graduating from the mental health field due to the environment we are now in?

Answer:

Maybe, but based on the responses we are getting from health care workers about their mental health, we could see a net loss. More than half of health care workers tell us they are questioning their career choice because of the impact the pandemic has had on their mental health. Unless we can provide better mental health supports to frontline workers, that could make it more difficult to recruit and retain the next group of potential health care workers, too.