

For Immediate Release
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Approximately 28.6% of Local Adults Have Been Diagnosed with One or More Mental Health Disorders

*May is National Mental Health Awareness Month. This month is meant to break the stigma often associated with mental health disorders. Mental health is a state of emotional, psychological, and social well-being in which an individual can enjoy life and cope with everyday situations and stressors. The presence of a healthy or positive mental health state can be determined by how well individuals view their potential, work productively, cope with daily stresses of life, socialize, and manage emotions. With added stress due to uncertainty in the current global pandemic as well as changes to work and social aspects of life, it may become difficult for adults and children to maintain positive mental health. **In this Press Release, we present Coachella Valley level statistics, health needs, and recommendations to support the quality of life in the Coachella Valley with respect to mental health.***

Palm Desert, CA (14 May 2020) — The United States has been observing Mental Health Awareness Month since 1949. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), more than 50% of Americans will be diagnosed with a mental health disorder at some point in their life. Mental health disorders are one of the most common illnesses; **in fact, 28.6% of Coachella Valley adults (97,340 people) have been diagnosed with one or more mental health disorders.** The most commonly diagnosed mental health disorders for local adults are depression (48,402 people) and anxiety (42,061 people).

Similarly, Coachella Valley children also experience mental health issues—19% of children ages three and up have been diagnosed with a mental health disorder, and 25% have difficulties with emotions, concentration, behavior, and/or getting along with others. The most common diagnosis for local children is attention deficit disorder/attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADD/ADHD).

It is important to mention there is no single cause for mental health disorders. Rather, there are several contributing risk factors that may increase the likelihood of developing a mental health disorder such as: adverse childhood experiences (ACEs), chronic medical conditions, substance use, and loneliness, among others. Locally, more than

36,500 children have experienced one or more of the following four ACEs: child's parents are divorced or separated; anyone in the household been depressed, mentally ill, or attempted suicide during child's lifetime; anyone in the household been to jail or prison during child's lifetime; anyone in the household has been a problem drinker, alcoholic, or use street drugs in the child's lifetime.

Coachella Valley Health Needs

It is also important to consider the possible barriers for adults and children to access resources for their mental health disorders. In the Coachella Valley, only half (50.5%) of adults with a mental health disorder and/or concern received treatment in the form of visiting a mental health professional, a primary care physician and/or taking medication. **Moreover, there are 57.9% of children age three and older with a mental health disorder and/or behavioral health difficulties who did not receive any treatment in the past year**, which equates to 13,759 children.

Furthermore, the most common mental health treatment utilized by Coachella Valley children diagnosed with mental health disorders and/or behavioral difficulties is visiting a mental health professional (30.8%). Fewer children visited a doctor or pediatrician (21.8%) or have taken medication (18.2%). It is important for children to not only have adequate care but also affordable mental health services available in our community.

Recommendations for Positive Mental Health

In the age of the "new normal", our mental health is more vulnerable than ever before. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Governor Newsom has ordered all California residents to shelter-in-place and practice physical distancing. The loss of social connectedness and adjustment to remote work have an impact on our mental health. However, that does not mean we cannot maintain positive mental health. There are still ways we can connect with others and adjust our daily lives to a new normalcy.

Before the pandemic struck, 8.6% of local adults (or 30,000 people) reported they felt lonely or isolated "often" or "always". We imagine that figure must have exponentially increased because we are experiencing global lockdown. There are still safe ways to socially distance and connect with friends and family such as communicating via phone call, video chat, letters, etc. Not to mention, there are also ways to receive regular treatment with your physician via telemedicine appointments. The pandemic has imposed barriers to positive mental health, but we can still overcome those difficulties.

It is up to us to be proactive with our mental health and overall health. Online resources such as the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention provide a national suicide lifeline (1-800-273-8255) available for anyone who is having trouble with mental health. Additionally, Riverside County offers a Community Access, Referral, Evaluation and Support line (1-800-706-7500) for anyone who needs to be connected to mental health services and a 2-1-1 community connect referral hotline. Our community is here to support you during this difficult time.

To see more statistics regarding health information in the Coachella Valley, please visit: <https://harcddata.org/coachella-valley-community-health-survey/executive-report/>

For more resources, please visit:

<https://harcdata.org/covid-19/>

<https://up2riverside.org/>

<https://www.cdc.gov/mentalhealth/index.htm>

To schedule an interview with Dr. Jenna LeComte-Hinely call 760.404.1945 or email Jlecomte-hinely@HARCdata.org.

About HARC

HARC, Inc. (Health Assessment and Research for Communities) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization providing research and evaluation services related to health and wellness. HARC is funded in part by grants, donations, and the consulting services they offer. More information can be obtained by calling HARC at 760.404.1945, or visiting the organization's website at www.HARCdata.org

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