The Importance of National Minority Mental Health Awareness Month

According to the [U.S. Department of Health and Human Services](https://minorityhealth.hhs.gov/minority-mental-health/#:~:text=National%20Minority%20Mental%20Health%20Awareness%20Month%20is%20observed%20each%20July,illness%20in%20the%20United%20States.), July is National Minority Mental Health Awareness Month. This means that the month of July is a month dedicated to bringing awareness to the unique mental health struggles faced by those who are considered ethnic or racial minorities in the United States.

Mental health issues do not discriminate. However, a person’s background, culture, and personal identity all impact how mental health conditions appear as well as the person’s access to proper mental health care.

Having access to proper mental health care should be a right awarded to each and every one of us. However, [due to](https://www.nami.org/Get-Involved/Awareness-Events/Bebe-Moore-Campbell-National-Minority-Mental-Health-Awareness-Month) cultural incompetence, lower access to care, and lower quality care faced by many minorities in America, this right is unjustly not granted to all.

# **About National Minority Mental Health Awareness Month**

National Minority Mental Health Awareness Month saw its beginnings thanks to Bebe Moore Campbell, an African American author and journalist who worked every day to ensure her daughter had access to the mental health help she needed and deserved.

In her battle to help her daughter access high quality mental health care, Bebe learned just how inaccessible proper care could be to minorities in America. In July of 2008, Bebe Moore Campbell took the stand to address the U.S. Congress about the mental health care disparities faced by minorities in America.

In her address to Congress, Bebe talked about her own experiences in trying to get her daughter the mental health care she needed. She talked about the challenges faced by too many citizens of ethnic or cultural minorities, especially in mental health care that goes beyond diagnosis.

In her address, Bebe also discussed the fears faced y minorities about admitting their mental health may be struggling. Already having to deal with racist or discriminatory stereotypes, many minorities fear that admitting to mental health struggles will only leave them further stigmatized by the people surrounding them.

To attempt to further the awareness and changes Bebe was working so hard to bring, the U.S. House of Representatives made the decision to declare the month of July as National Minority Mental Health Awareness Month.

Bebe continues to further her mission to change the mental health care system by founding the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) chapter within her community, Inglewood, which is located in Los Angeles.

# **A Struggle to Access Quality Mental Health Care**

We all deserve access to high quality mental health care. However, far too often, ethnic and culturally minority communities face struggles when it comes to accessing high quality mental health care.

Mental health care can be expensive to some, especially those without health insurance that will cover their care. [Studies](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK24693/) have found that when compared to White populations, Black, Hispanic, and Asian populations seem to have lower levels of health care coverage- with Hispanic populations appearing to have the greatest barriers to health insurance than any other ethnic and cultural group.

Because of these states, many minorities seek health care only when absolutely necessary, as preventative measures and regular checkups are just not affordable for them. Instead, members of these minority populations were found to be more likely to receive most of their health care through the emergency room.

The issue with paying for mental health care is only the beginning of the plentiful disparities faced by minorities in our country. With so many stereotypes and stigmas faced by minorities, another disparity could be fear of furthering the discrimination and racism they deal with within their community. Different cultures have their own ideas and stigmas regarding mental health that mental health care providers must learn to be sensitive to. However, one of the most difficult obstacles a person within a minority community must face is overcoming the stigmas they have about mental health and seeking the care they need.

And yet, the disparities don’t end there. Language barriers can be yet another reason so many minorities struggle to access mental health care. Without access to mental health counseling therapists who can communicate with those that speak a different language, such as Spanish, many minorities will struggle to talk through the mental health issues they are facing.

These are only a few of the many disparities in our mental health care system. We must continue to further our research, make changes, and create high quality mental health care for all. This is why the American Psychological Association has begun to place such an emphasis on the subject of cultural competence, a key competence needed by mental health care professionals to ensure their patients are receiving the health care they need and deserve.

# **What is Cultural Competence?**

[Cultural competence](https://www.apa.org/monitor/2015/03/cultural-competence) can be defined as having the ability to understand, welcome, and properly interact with individuals whose culture or systems of belief differ from one’s own culture and beliefs. Having adequate cultural competence is so crucial to the practice of psychology. As one prepares to open and grow with the help of a mental health professional, they must first be able to trust them, which is why a psychologist with empathy and understanding of one’s cultural and ethnic background can be so critical to quality patient care.

# **Ways You Can Raise Awareness for National Minority Mental Health Awareness Month**

In order to fix the glaring mental health disparities faced by far too many citizens in our country, we must put in the effort to raise awareness. High quality mental health care is critical to living a high-quality life, which should be accessible to each and every one of us. If you would like to learn some ways you can raise awareness about minority mental health this National Minority Mental Health Month, we are here to help you. A few steps you can take to spread the word include:

## **Educating Yourself**

 There are tons of excellent free resources online to help you learn more about the disparities faced by the minorities in your community. Take some time to learn more about the changes needed to our mental health care system to ensure that everyone has access to high quality care.

## **Educating Your Loved Ones**

Don’t be afraid to talk to the people in your social circle about minority mental health care. The more people we have prepared to spread the word, the better chance we have of changing our world for the better.

## **Utilize Your Social Media**

There are tons of excellent resources you can share with your friends and followers on your social media accounts. Take a few moments this month to get the word out there about National Minority Mental Health Month by sharing posts on your stories or in your news feeds.

# **We Are Here for You**

You deserve a mental health counseling therapist who can be here for you. If you are looking for a culturally competent mental health counseling therapist, our team is here for you. Our counselors are compassionate, experienced professionals who are prepared to do all they can to help each and every client work through a wide variety of mental health issues. [Contact](https://michiganpsychologicalcare.com/contact.php) us today.

**References**

[https://minorityhealth.hhs.gov/minority-mental-health/#:~:text=National%20Minority%20Mental%20Health%20Awareness%20Month%20is%20observed%20each%20July,illness%20in%20the%20United%20States](https://minorityhealth.hhs.gov/minority-mental-health/" \l ":~:text=National%20Minority%20Mental%20Health%20Awareness%20Month%20is%20observed%20each%20July,illness%20in%20the%20United%20States" \t "_blank).

<https://www.nami.org/Get-Involved/Awareness-Events/Bebe-Moore-Campbell-National-Minority-Mental-Health-Awareness-Month>

<https://www.apa.org/monitor/2015/03/cultural-competence>

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