



## Campaign for Mental Health Recovery – African American Effort

**Campaign Sponsor:** U.S. Department of Health and Human Services  
Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)

**Volunteer Advertising Agency:** Grey New York

### CAMPAIGN OBJECTIVE:

To promote recovery from mental health problems within the African American community by encouraging, educating and inspiring 18-25 year olds to step up and talk openly about mental health problems.

### BACKGROUND:

Mental illnesses (depression, anxiety, bipolar disorder, schizophrenia, etc.) are widespread and often misunderstood. In 2008 there were an estimated 9.8 million adults aged 18 or older living with serious mental illness. Among adults, the prevalence of serious mental illness is highest in the 18 to 25 age group, yet this age group is also the least likely to receive services or counseling. In 2008, 6.0 percent of African Americans ages 18-25 had serious mental illness in the past year.

Within the African American population specifically, mental health problems are often viewed as weaknesses of character and sources of shame rather than a treatable illness that can be overcome. Those with mental health conditions in this age group have a high potential to minimize future disability and pursue recovery if social acceptance is broadened and they receive the right support and services early on.

### CAMPAIGN DESCRIPTION:

The opportunity for recovery is more likely in a society of acceptance, and this campaign seeks to motivate the necessary societal change towards social acceptance and decreasing the negative attitudes that surround mental illness, especially prevalent within the African American community. By sharing real and personal stories of African Americans dealing with mental health problems, the PSA campaign is designed to encourage the target to step up and share their strength with a loved one who is dealing with mental health problems.

The campaign includes television, radio, print, and interactive elements. Viewers and listeners are encouraged to visit the campaign website to learn more about mental health problems and how they can support their friend's recovery.

### TARGET AUDIENCE:

18-25 year-old African Americans

### RESEARCH:

- In 2008, 6% of African Americans ages 18-25 had serious mental illness in the past year.<sup>i</sup>
- Overall, only 58.7% of Americans with serious mental illness received care within the past 12 months. Yet, the percentage of African Americans receiving services is only 44.8%.<sup>ii</sup>
- African Americans tend to rely on family, religious and social communities for emotional support rather than turning to health care professionals, even though this may at times be necessary.<sup>iii</sup>
- Researchers identified stigma as a significant barrier to access and treatment of mental illness for African Americans that also impacts help-seeking behaviors.<sup>iv</sup>

### FOR ADDITIONAL CAMPAIGN INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT:

Nirmal Deshpande  
Campaign Manager  
The Advertising Council, Inc.  
815 Second Avenue, 10<sup>th</sup> Floor  
New York, NY 10017  
[ndeshpande@adcouncil.org](mailto:ndeshpande@adcouncil.org)  
Phone: (212) 984-1937  
Fax: (212) 922-1676  
[www.adcouncil.org](http://www.adcouncil.org)

Chris Marshall  
Consumer Affairs Specialist  
Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration  
1 Choke Cherry Road, Rm. 6-1071  
Rockville, MD 20857  
[chris.marshall@samhsa.hhs.gov](mailto:chris.marshall@samhsa.hhs.gov)  
Phone: (240) 276-1947  
Fax: (240) 276-1340  
[www.samhsa.gov](http://www.samhsa.gov)

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CI-Group  
10 Salem Park  
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Whitehouse, NH 08888  
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[adcouncil@ci-groupusa.com](mailto:adcouncil@ci-groupusa.com)

<sup>i</sup> Office of Applied Studies, Patterns of Mental Health Service Utilization and Substance Use Among Adults, 2008.

<sup>ii</sup> *Mental Health: A Report of the Surgeon General 1999*. Mental Health: Culture, Race, Ethnicity- Fact Sheets.

<sup>iii</sup> *Psychiatric News* October 19, 2001. Vol. 36, No. 20, p. 19. American Psychiatric Association

<sup>iv</sup> *Issues in Mental Health Nursing* 26:10, 1043 - 1059, Bolden, Lois and Wicks, Mona Newsome (2005)