

# Why Mental Health Matters

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# ABOUT US

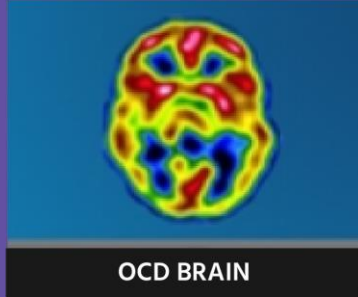
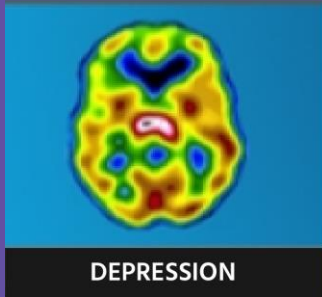
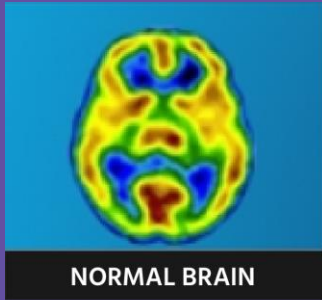
**Mental Health Association Oklahoma** is the state's premier boots-on-the-ground non-profit whose expertise and work exists primarily at the intersection of mental illness and homelessness - fighting every day to promote mental health, preventing suicide, end homelessness, and transform the justice system.



# THE TRUTH

- Both mental illness and addiction are real medical conditions, just like diabetes and heart disease.
- In terms of addiction, although initial substance use might be voluntary, alcohol and other drugs have been shown to alter gene expression and brain circuitry, which in turn affect human behavior.
- Once addiction develops, these brain changes interfere with an individual's ability to make voluntary decisions, leading to compulsive substance abuse, seeking and use.

# DISEASES OF THE BRAIN



As scientists continue to investigate the brains of people who experience mental illnesses, they are learning that mental illness is associated with changes in the brain's structure, chemistry and function, and that mental illness does indeed have a biological basis.

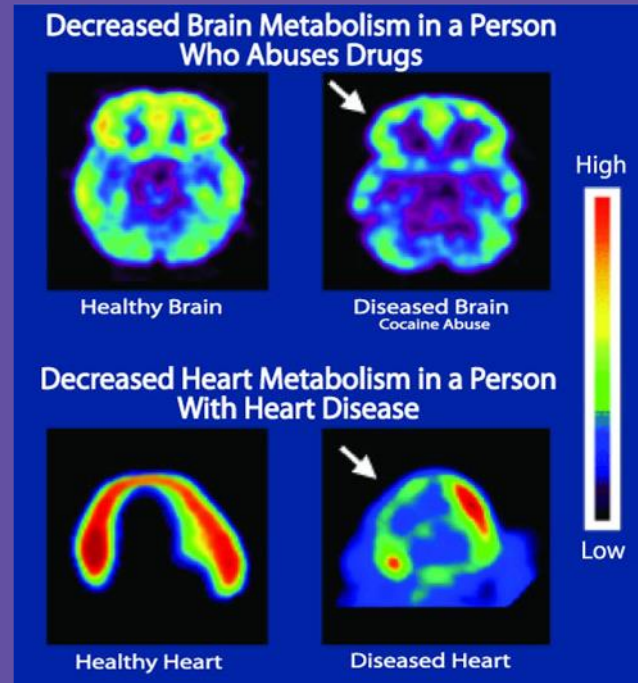
-- *The Science of Mental Illness, NIH*

# DISEASES OF THE BRAIN

Addiction is similar to other diseases, such as heart disease or diabetes.

Both disrupt the normal, healthy functioning of the underlying organ, have serious harmful consequences, are preventable, treatable, and if left untreated, can last a lifetime.

– *National Institute on Drug Abuse*



# THE IMPACT

- **22.54%** of adult Oklahomans are affected by mental illness compared to **19.86%**, nationally.
- **Between 700,000 and 900,000 adult Oklahomans** are in need of services for these diseases of the brain (approximately **657,000** reporting mental illness and **234,000** reporting alcohol or illicit drug dependence/disorders).
- **Less than 1/3** of these Oklahomans are accessing the medical services they need to treat these diseases.

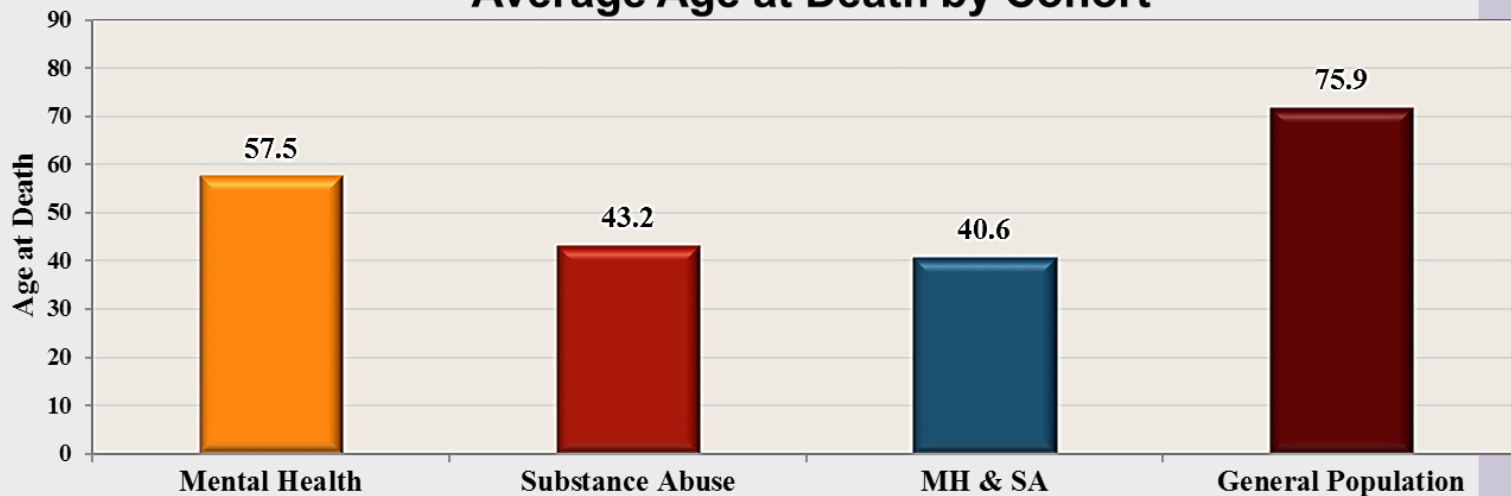
# MIND & BODY CONNECTED

- Everyday language tends to encourage a misperception that mental health or mental illness is unrelated to physical health or physical illness. In fact, the two are integrally connected.
- A study conducted by Columbia University indicates that depression can actually lead to heart disease.
- Prolonged substance abuse can lead to cardiovascular disease, cancer, hypertension, pneumonia, and a number of other physical illnesses.



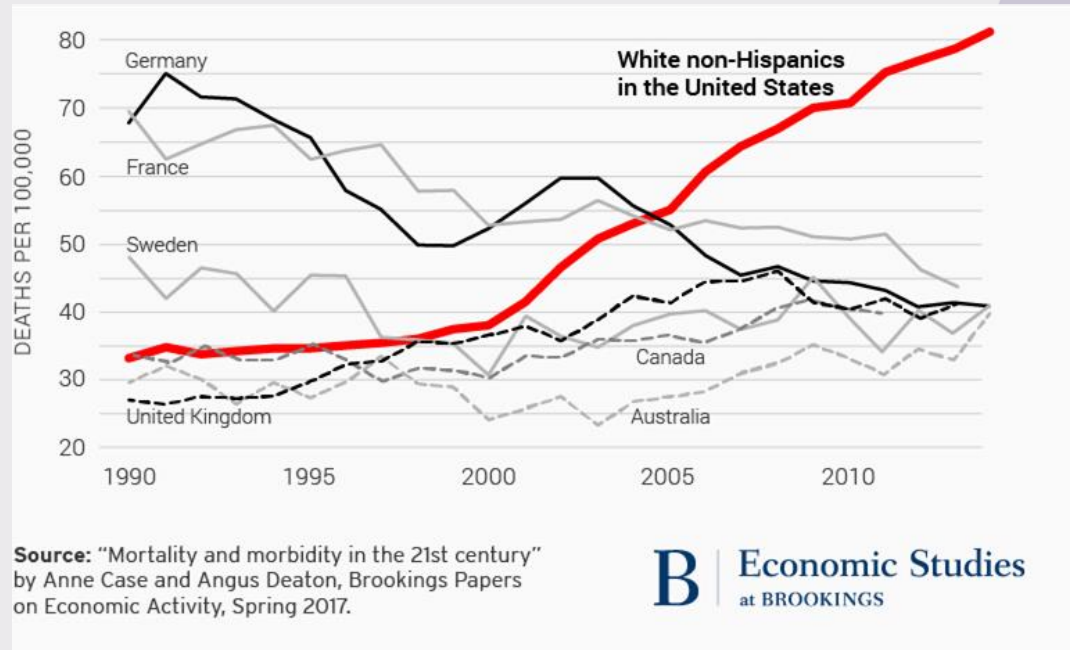
# LIVES CUT SHORT

## Mortality Average Age at Death by Cohort



# LIVES CUT SHORT

In 2015, Princeton economists first pointed out an alarming trend of **increasing mortality** disproportionately impacting white middle-aged Americans.



# LIVES CUT SHORT

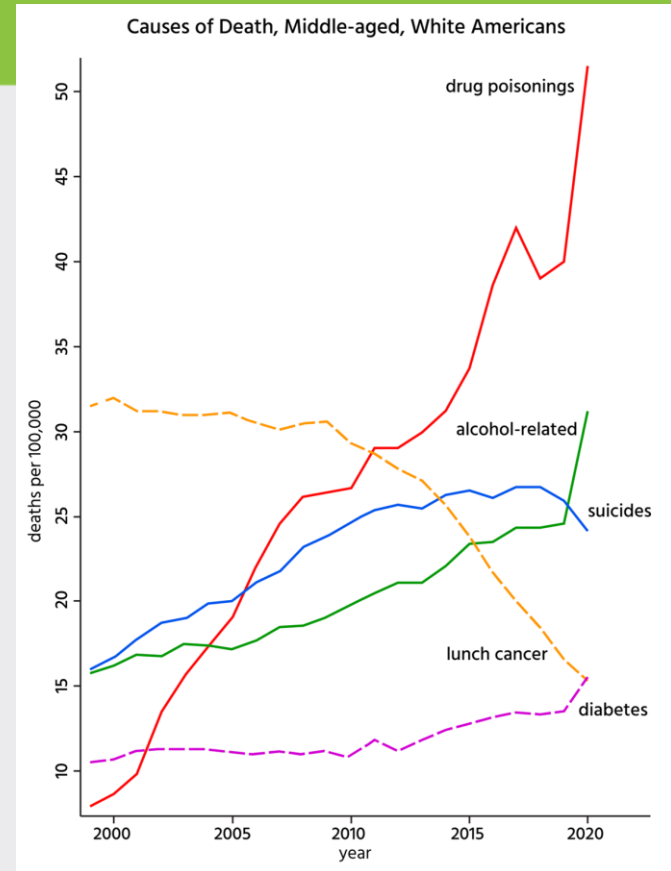
Three causes of death are driving the decreased life expectancy:

1. Drug overdose
2. Suicide
3. Liver disease due to alcohol

Upward trends in these areas are large enough to drive up *all-cause* midlife mortality.

Who is being impacted?

- Geographically diverse
- Primarily middle-aged



# THE IMPORTANCE OF SUICIDE PREVENTION

- Suicide occurs most frequently among individuals of working age, **25-65 years**.
- In the last four years, Oklahoma's suicide rate has jumped from **16th in the nation to 6th**.
- Suicides among **Black Oklahomans doubled** from 2016 to 2020.
- Suicide rates are **highest in rural Oklahoma** where access to care is scarce.

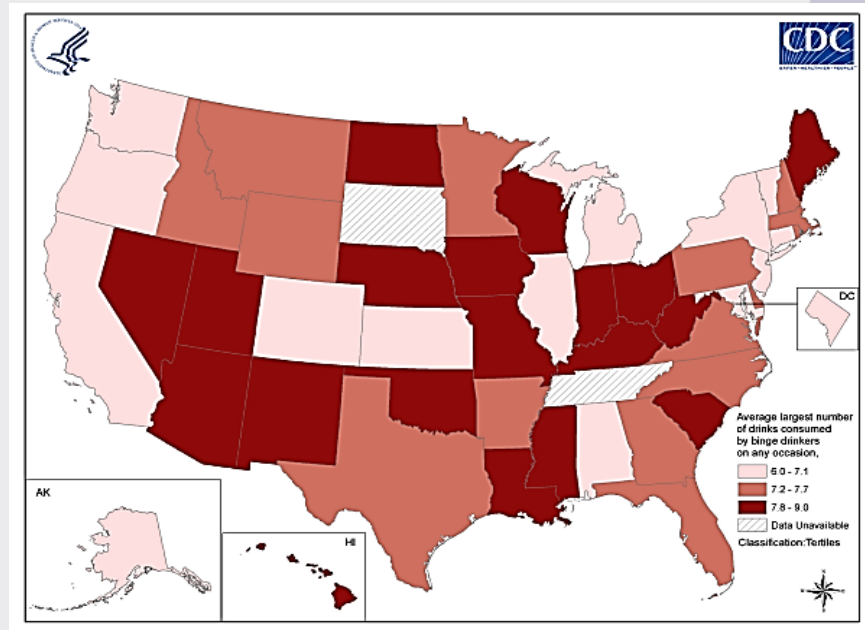
# HOW WE STACK UP

For every 100,000 people in the **U.S.**, **13.5** died by suicide in 2020, compared to **21.9 Oklahomans** per 100,000.

# BINGE DRINKING

## In Oklahoma:

- **12.8% of adults** report binge drinking
- **21.8% of high school students** binge drink.
- Adults outpace the US in binge drinking *intensity* at an average of **8.4 drinks per binge occasion.**



# COVID IMPACT

- Experts began warning of **dire consequences** soon after the pandemic arrived: Mental health crises would escalate. Suicides and overdose deaths would rise. In Oklahoma, those predictions came true.
- In 2020, **869 Oklahomans died by suicide**, according to data provided by the state medical examiner's office - the highest year on record.

# COVID IMPACT

- Oklahoma's baseline rate for any mental illness was around **20-25% pre-pandemic**, but COVID-era stressors led to a peak of **nearly 45% in late 2020** for depression and anxiety symptoms.
- Though some of us may have more "cope in our cup," stress can lead to anxiety and depression for some individuals.
- COVID shows mental health struggles can be exacerbated by prolonged stress or even cause mental health struggles.





# Our Youth

- In 2019, the National Survey on Drug Use and Health indicated that “the percentage of youth ages 12-17 who reported experiencing a past-year major depressive episode (MDE) had doubled over the past decade.
- **The largest increases** in the proportion of youth experiencing suicidal ideation between 2019 and 2020 were for **Black or African American screeners and Hispanic or Latinx screeners.**
- Mental Health America’s online screening data indicates that **youth ages 11-17** who identified as **Native American or American Indian** and those who identified as **multiracial** had the highest rates of depression.

# ACEs & CHILDHOOD TRAUMA

- We are hearing reports from hospitals that as many as **45 children** are coming each month to the ER presenting with mental health issues.
- Another hospital reported as many as **25% of their patients**, including children, were presenting with substance use disorders and related issues including overdoses.

# CHANGING THE COURSE

- We need school-based mental health programs including intervention and prevention.
- Embrace tools like the good behavior game.
- The right tools can prevent mental illness, substance use, suicide, and violence.

# THE IMPORTANCE OF WORKPLACE WELLNESS

- Untreated mental health is the **leading health reason for work performance loss and second for absenteeism.**
- There has been a **21% increase** in **mental health disability claims** over the last decade.
- **Depression** costs **\$17 per employer per year** in **disability wage replacement costs**, compared with \$2 for diabetes, the next-highest chronic condition.
- From 2000 to 2019 there was a **39%** increase in workplace suicides.

# THE IMPORTANCE OF WORKPLACE WELLNESS

- **67%** of HR professionals believe that **substance abuse is one of the most serious issues** they face in their company.
- **Absenteeism, reduced productivity** and a **lack of trust** are major problems stemming from substance abuse that affect the efficiency and success of companies.
- Nearly **75%** of all adult illicit drug users are employed, as are most binge/heavy alcohol users.
- **Absenteeism** is estimated to be **4 to 8 times greater** among those with alcohol use disorder and who abuse alcohol.
- Overdose fatalities have increased by at least **25% annually since 2012.**

# EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (EAP)

- Confidential counseling service, paid for by the employer.
- Designed to help employees and family members who have personal struggles that can interfere with their work and family life.
- Increase workplace productivity and morale.
- The Labor Department reports EAPs reduce:
  - Sick leave usage by **33%**
  - Work-related accidents by **65%**
  - Workers' compensation claims by **30%**

# HOUSING IS HEALTHCARE

- About half of those experiencing homelessness struggle with mental health issues.
- **Housing First** - a national, evidence-based approach that provides direct access to housing and services to homeless and at-risk subpopulations that are excluded from the housing market, regardless of ability to pay when entering the housing.
- Supportive housing as an intervention for those who frequently use emergency services is an extremely efficient and cost-effective approach to public health.





**MENTAL  
HEALTH  
ASSOCIATION  
OKLAHOMA**

**THANK YOU!**

Website: [mhaok.org](http://mhaok.org)

Social media: [@mhaokla](https://www.instagram.com/mhaokla)