

Making Mental Health Care Accessible in Denver

By: Jean Miller, Ph.D., LPC, NCC, ACS
University of Phoenix, Colorado Campus,
College of Social Sciences Campus Chair and NAMI Arapahoe/Douglas Board Vice President

As an educator training new mental health providers, it is my goal to prepare professionals who can address the growing demands for mental health care. As a licensed professional counselor and nationally certified counselor, I believe that it is our profession's responsibility to also help break down barriers to care – whether they are stigmas, access to services or overall awareness of managing one's own mental health.

In Colorado, mass casualty events in recent years have reinforced the importance of building skills and resources within our communities to help cope with and prevent these tragic events. In an [in-depth](#) report, *The Denver Post* examined the crisis of behavioral health in our state.

Recent data backs up this reality. A University of Phoenix® [survey](#) found that two-thirds of U.S. adults report they have personally experienced a mental health issue, with about three in 10 reporting anxiety (29 percent) or a mood disorder, such as depression (30 percent). Roughly six in 10 say someone in their immediate family has experienced mental health issues. About two in three say mental health issues are a very or extremely serious issue in the U.S.¹ Tellingly, the same University survey revealed that the number of Denver residents who report experiencing issues like anxiety (32 percent), grief (28 percent) and marriage or relationship stress (25 percent) is greater than the national average.²

Counselors can be, and often are, the first line of defense in helping people suffering from mental health concerns get the treatment they need. Counselors treat issues such as stress, anxiety, depression, and they provide help with navigating major life changes. Additionally, preventative mental health care is crucial to help people manage issues before they become major issues that start to impact personal relationships, work or even overall health.³

University of Phoenix strives to be a champion for mental health wellness by improving access to care, raising awareness of the need for increased mental health services and reducing the stigma for those seeking care or living with symptoms of mental illness. As part of the University's commitment to serving Denver-area residents, counseling graduate students provide free counseling services under the direct supervision of licensed mental health professionals at the University of Phoenix campus located in Lone Tree at 10004 Park Meadows Drive. The Counseling Center can be reached at 303-600-1959 to schedule an appointment.

Stigma around mental health issues remains a persistent problem, but there are signs that progress is being made in recognizing and overcoming it—a University of Phoenix survey found that 74 percent of registered U.S. voters say there are many stigmas associated with mental

¹ The 2015 survey was conducted online within the United States by Harris Poll on behalf of University of Phoenix September 28-October 8, 2015, among 1,014 U.S. adults ages 18 and older. For complete survey methodology, including weighting variables, please contact angela.heisel@phoenix.edu.

² Ibid.

³ https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/psychotherapies/index.shtml#part_153564

illnesses.⁴ The survey also found that 62 percent of Denver registered voters believe mental health is an extremely or very serious problem.

Dealing with mental health issues is often an uphill battle. Staying committed to raising awareness of mental health and well-being that leads to a better quality of life is something that everyone can do, and many in Colorado have taken part in helping to improve. Together, I know that Colorado can become a leader in mental health.

⁴ This poll was conducted from April 7-9, 2016, among a national sample of 1,990 registered voters. The interviews were conducted online and the data were weighted to approximate a target sample of registered voters based on age, race/ethnicity, gender, educational attainment, region, annual household income, home ownership status and marital status. Results from the full survey have a margin of error of plus or minus 2 percentage points.