



# Understanding Social Determinants of Health and Mental Health Equity

In recent decades, greater attention has focused on how housing, environment, transportation, education and poverty impact our health. These social determinants of health (SDoH) have been shown to have a greater influence on physical and mental well-being than genetic factors, and can cause gaps in care among racial, ethnic and socioeconomic groups.

## Impact of SDoH on Disadvantaged Groups

Social determinants of health tend to have a higher impact for disadvantaged groups, leading to significant differences in physical and mental health outcomes. For example, low-income individuals and residents of rural areas experience a significantly greater burden of disease and lower life expectancy compared to higher-income, white and urban counterparts. LGBTQ populations (especially transgender individuals), Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC), and people with disabilities have been shown to experience greater mental health challenges than non-marginalized communities.

In understanding the causes behind these disparities, we can work toward greater health care access and quality.

## Affect of SDoH on Mental Health

Low household income, low educational attainment, material disadvantage, unemployment and social isolation are among the biggest factors associated with poor mental health. Providers should be willing to actively address these factors in their treatment. Finding a therapist who not only recognizes, but is responsive to, the influence of social determinants on mental health is crucial.

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Social determinants of health (SDoH) have greater influence on well-being than genetics and cause gaps in care among minorities.

Centers for Disease Control & Prevention

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Here are some terms that may help you understand culturally appropriate treatment:

**Cultural Competence:** Integrating cultural, social and linguistic factors into care to improve progress.

**Accessibility:** Offering services that are physically and financially accessible to those in need, including telehealth options.

**Community Engagement:** Working with community organizations to reach and support underserved populations.

Social determinants of health affect us all differently and can only be understood through the lens of an individual's cultural experience. By integrating an understanding of SDoH into mental health care, we can better address gaps in mental health across different populations and advance health equity for all.

To learn more, visit the CDC's Health Equity Resources page at [cdc.gov/dnpao-state-local-programs/php/data-research/health-equity-resources.html](https://cdc.gov/dnpao-state-local-programs/php/data-research/health-equity-resources.html)

## #MinorityMentalHealthMatters #NotaCharacterFlaw

If you or someone you know is struggling with mental health issue, help is out there. Contact the Mental Health America 24/7 Crisis Text Line (Text MHA to 741-741).

