

Understanding Social Determinants of Health and Mental Health Equity

Our health is shaped by many parts of daily life. These include where we live, how we get around, our income and the schools in our community. These factors are called social determinants of health. They often affect our physical and mental health more than our genes (CDC). They also create gaps in care for people of different races, backgrounds and income levels.

Impact on Disadvantaged Groups

Social determinants of health can harm some groups more than others. This can lead to serious health problems and shorter lives. People with low incomes and people in rural areas often face more illness than people with higher incomes or those in cities. LGBTQ people, BIPOC communities and people with disabilities also face higher rates of mental health issues. These differences show why fair access to care is important.

Effects on Mental Health

Some life conditions make mental health challenges more likely. These include low income, limited education, lack of work, and being alone or without support. Not having basic needs met can also make stress worse. Health care providers should talk about these issues with their patients. It helps to find a therapist who understands how these factors shape mental health.

Key Terms to Know

Cultural competence: Care that respects a person's culture, background and language.

Accessibility: Care that is easy to reach and afford. This can include telehealth.

Community engagement: Working with local groups to support people who face barriers to care.

Social determinants of health affect each person in different ways. They make more sense when we look at a person's own culture and life experience. When mental health care includes these factors, we can reduce gaps in care and move closer to health equity for everyone.

For more information, visit the [CDC's Health Equity Resources](#).

#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).

Reviewed by medical director, MD and senior counsel, JD.



Social factors like housing, income and access to care affect health even more than genetics and can have a greater impact on people of color.

Centers for Disease Control & Prevention

LCT-303-20260519