



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
OCTOBER 6, 2014**

Contact: Christina Cordova-Herrera
Phone: 312-948-3344
E-mail: ccordova@catholiccharities.net

1 in 4 Adults in the U.S. Experiences Mental Illness Each Year *Holbrook Counseling Center Shares Myths vs Realities during Mental Illness Awareness Week*

Chicago, IL – During this Mental Illness Awareness Week, October 5 to 11, Catholic Charities Holbrook Counseling Center shares some myths and realities associated with mental illness. According to the National Alliance on Mental Illness, each year, one in four adults in the U.S. experiences a form of mental illness. In your workplace, on your commute, or at the grocery store, one of the people you encounter has been diagnosed with a mental illness. One in 17 adults in the U.S. lives with a serious mental illness such as schizophrenia, major depression or bipolar disorder. Approximately 20% of youth in the U.S., ages 13 to 18, experience severe mental disorders. For children and youth, ages eight to 15, the estimate is 13%. These numbers show the increasing need for public education and mental health services in our communities.

For the past 50 years, Catholic Charities Holbrook Counseling Center has provided professional compassionate care to residents of Cook and Lake counties in need of counseling support. Our team of licensed therapists work together to fulfill the mission of Catholic Charities; to serve anyone in need regardless of faith. With ongoing treatment, individuals suffering from mental illness can develop strategies to deal with their illness, and carry on healthy, productive and meaningful lives. Receiving treatment early is the most effective way to deal with a mental illness or mental health problem.

Catholic Charities Holbrook Counseling Center experts share the following 10 “Myths vs Realities” of mental illnesses:

- 1) **Myth:** *Mental health problems do not affect children or youth. Any problems they have are just part of growing up.*
Reality: One in five children and youth struggle with their mental health. 70% of adult mental illness begins during childhood or adolescence, including: depression, eating disorders, obsessive compulsive disorder and anxiety disorders. However, 79% of youth who receive help improve significantly with treatment.
- 2) **Myth:** *It is the parents' fault if children suffer from mental health problems.*
Reality: Mental health disorders in children are caused by biology, environment, or a combination of both. They can be caused by genetics or biological factors such as a chemical imbalance or prenatal exposure to alcohol or drugs. They can also be the result of abusive or neglectful treatment or stressful events.
- 3) **Myth:** *People with a mental illness are “psycho”, mad and dangerous, and should be locked away.*
Reality: Most people who have a mental illness struggle with depression and anxiety. They have normal lives, but their feelings and behaviors negatively affect their day-to-day activities. Conduct disorders, or acting-out behaviors, are consistently the primary reason for referral to a children's mental health agency.

- 4) **Myth:** *All people with Schizophrenia are violent.*
Reality: Very little violence in society is caused by people who are mentally ill. Unfortunately, the cinematic industry portrays mentally ill people as dangerous. Individuals with a major mental illness are more likely to be victims of violence than perpetrators.
- 5) **Myth:** *Depression is a character flaw and people should just “snap out of it”.*
Reality: Research shows that depression has nothing to do with being lazy or weak. It results from changes in brain chemistry or brain function. Therapy and/or medication help people to recover.
- 6) **Myth:** *Addiction is a lifestyle choice and shows a lack of willpower.*
Reality: Addictions involve complex factors including genetics, the environment, and sometimes other underlying psychiatric conditions such as depression. When people who become addicted have these underlying vulnerabilities, it's harder for them to simply kick the habit.
- 7) **Myth:** *People with a mental illness lack intelligence.*
Reality: Intelligence has nothing to do with mental illnesses or brain disorders. On one hand, many people with mental disorders are brilliant, creative, productive people. On the other hand, some individuals with mental disorders are not brilliant or creative. Certain mental illnesses may make it difficult for people to remember facts or get along with other people, making it seem like they are cognitively challenged. Overall, the level of intelligence among persons with mental illness likely parallels the patterns seen in any healthy population.
- 8) **Myth:** *People with a mental illness shouldn't work because they'll just drag down the rest of the staff.*
Reality: People with mental illness can and do function well in the workplace. They are unlikely to miss any more workdays because of their condition than people with a chronic physical condition such as diabetes or heart disease. The real problem is the prejudice against hiring people with mental illness. The resulting unemployment leaves them isolated, a situation that can add to their stress, and make it more difficult to recover from the illness.
- 9) **Myth:** *Mental illness is a single, rare disorder.*
Reality: Anxiety disorders, mood disorders, personality disorders, addiction disorders and impulse control disorders are all different categories of very different mental illnesses- each with its own features and underlying causes (common mental illnesses). Each mental illness is a variation on the theme of brain chemistry gone awry, affecting things like mood and perception and each has its own specific causes, features and approaches to treatment.
- 10) **Myth:** *People with a mental illness never get better.*
Reality: Treatments for mental illnesses are more numerous and more sophisticated than ever before; greatly increasing the recovery rate, and researchers continue to discover new treatments. Because of these advances, many people can and do recover from mental illness.

For information about Catholic Charities Counseling Services, please call (312) 655-7725 or visit www.catholiccharities.net/holbrook. Services are provided in Chicago and in several locations throughout Cook and Lake counties. Spanish-speaking staff is available in some locations.

About Catholic Charities

Helping people in need for more than 97 years, Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Chicago is one of the largest private, not-for-profit social service agencies in the Midwest, annually assisting more than 1million people in Cook and Lake counties without regard to religious, ethnic or economic background. Catholic Charities fulfills the Church's role in the mission of charity by providing compassionate, competent, professional services that strengthen and support individuals, families and communities.