

PREVENTION FIRST

NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

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Prevention First Celebrates Mental Health Awareness Month 2026

[Springfield, IL] – May 1, 2026 – Mental Health Awareness Month has been observed every May since 1949, when [Mental Health America](#) established it as a time to raise awareness, reduce stigma, and remind people that mental health matters just as much as physical health. This year's national theme, *More Good Days, Together*, is a call to connect individuals to the right support at the right time—and to build the advocacy, education, and community engagement that makes more good days possible for everyone.

Prevention First's Commitment to Mental Health

Mental health is a cornerstone of our work at Prevention First. Across programs, our agency provides Illinois organizations, schools, and communities with the resources needed to better respond to mental health challenges. One example is Mental Health First Aid (MHFA), an evidence-based training that teaches participants how to identify, understand, and respond to signs of mental health and substance use challenges. Through professional development opportunities like this, alongside technical assistance and evidence-based resource sharing, our agency works to build mental health literacy at both the individual and organizational levels.

In support of Mental Health Awareness Month (MHAM), Prevention First will extend that work beyond its training rooms and into the broader community, using agency social media channels to share mental health resources and educational toolkits throughout May. With a direct commitment to increasing equitable access to mental health information for all, Spanish-language materials will be offered alongside the English resources provided.

Why It Matters

Mental health affects people of every age, background, and walk of life. In the United States alone, the 2024 [National Survey on Drug Use and Health](#) (NSDUH) found that 1 in 5 adults and 1 in 7 youth experience a mental health condition each year.

The impact of mental health on young people is perhaps the most alarming. The [Center for Disease Control & Prevention](#) (CDC) reports that, nationally, suicide is the second leading cause of death among individuals aged 10 to 34. Closer to home, the 2024 [Illinois Youth Survey](#) (IYS) found that nearly 1 in 3 Illinois 10th and 12th graders reported feeling so sad or hopeless almost every day for two or more weeks that they stopped participating in usual activities, while 10-12% seriously considered suicide within the past year. These figures reflect a growing crisis that demands attention, action, and above all, accessible resources for those in need.

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Illinois is home to the fifth-largest Hispanic population in the nation and the largest in the Midwest—a community that faces its own distinct mental health challenges. According to the [2024 NSDUH](#), 20.7% of Hispanic adults experienced any mental illness (AMI) in the past year, and 4.3% experienced serious mental illness (SMI). Yet access to care remains a significant barrier—only 44.1% of those with AMI and 62.4% of those with SMI reported receiving mental health treatment.

Stigma, lack of awareness, and limited access to resources remain among the most persistent barriers for those seeking mental health care. Expanding access to Spanish-language materials offers one small step towards broader accessibility for communities everywhere. Ultimately, more good days for all of us are only possible when everyone has the tools and support they need to thrive. This May, Prevention First is committed to making that a reality for Illinois communities.

Follow the Campaign

The public is invited to follow Prevention First on its social media channels throughout May to access these resources, share them with loved ones, and join the broader conversation about mental health in our communities. All materials are free to view and share.

- Facebook – [Prevention First](#)
- Instagram – [@prevention_first](#)
- LinkedIn – [Prevention First, Inc.](#)
- X – [@drugfreeIL](#)

About Prevention First

Prevention First is a nonprofit organization with more than 40 years of experience advancing substance use prevention and mental health promotion across Illinois. The organization provides training, technical assistance, and resources to professionals, schools, and communities statewide.

For more information, visit prevention.org.
