

PRESS RELEASE

Prince George's County Health Department

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Prince George's County Health Department Launches Campaign to Reduce the Stigma of Mental Illness in Our Communities

The Step Forward campaign includes a series of advertisements and a partnership with a national organization to empower young people, adults and families to lead healthier lives

LARGO, MD – In conjunction with Mental Health Awareness Month, Prince George's County launched a public awareness campaign on May 14 that changes the conversation about mental illness in the hopes of reducing the stigma that often prevents individuals from seeking treatment. County Executive Rushern L. Baker, III joined the Health Department and representatives from a variety of partnering County agencies and nonprofit organizations to launch Step Forward. The campaign aims to increase the understanding of mental illness, promote access to and the utilization of treatment services in the continuum of care, and improve stability and recovery.

"Ensuring that children and families are more aware of mental health issues and the resources available to address them is important," said County Executive Baker. "We have to erase the stigma that is associated with seeking help in our communities, so our residents view getting professional help for their mental health as important as getting help for their physical health. This campaign is about ensuring that our residents, including our young people, understand that they are not alone and that there are resources out there to assist them."

A series of advertisements and a newly designed [website](#) will educate the public about prevention and intervention strategies, as well as provide a map showing the location of mental health and substance use treatment providers with a summary of the services they provide.

"The most visible part of the Step Forward campaign are the countywide bus shelter advertisements," said Prince George's County Health Officer Pamela Creekmur. "The

ads give a different perspective on mental health while also providing important information about finding immediate or long-term help.”

The advertisements also highlight the County’s new partnership with [Crisis Text Line](#), a national crisis assistance service intended to reach residents ages 13 to 25, who are often most comfortable texting someone about personal problems.

During a campaign kick-off event in Landover, several D.C. area residents shared their powerful personal stories about living with mental illness as adults, teenagers, and families. Tiffany Jackson wrote a poem about her life that inspired the room. Here’s an excerpt: “Stigma doesn’t define me. I’m a woman with a bachelor’s degree. Mental illness didn’t stop me.”

Samples of the bus shelter advertisements are included as an attachment to this release. Photographs of the kick-off event can be found at this link:

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/pgcfamilyservices/albums/72157691054643140>

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