**Mental Health Stigma Newsletter Article Template**

*(Note: This newsletter article template needs to have info included from your organization before it is issued.)*

**New Social Marketing Campaign Takes on Stigma Around Mental Health**

***The Project’s Goal is to Lower Stigma so People Get the Help They Need***

A new Colorado social marketing campaign is designed to reduce the stigma around mental health treatment so that people who need this care will access it. The campaign, called “Let’s Talk Colorado,” is sponsored by a coalition of public and private health agencies including *(put your organization’s name here).* This work is part of the Colorado State Innovation Model (SIM) grant to better integrate physical and behavioral health.

“The stigma around mental illness and seeking mental health care is one that unfortunately endures, and lowering this stigma is essential so that people who have mental health challenges know they are not alone, that there is treatment that can help and, finally, that they are valued and deserve quality care,” said John M. Douglas, Jr., MD, executive director for the Tri-County Health Department.

To ensure the project meets its goal of lowering the stigma around mental illness and mental health care, the project team used a series of focus groups to test messages designed to resonate with both patients, medical providers and the public generally. The revised messages were then integrated into a variety of materials including a short video, social media content, a presentation and flyer.

“We are so pleased that *(your organization’s name)* was able to participate in this project,” said *(your org’s spokesperson followed by their title)*. “As we dived in we learned so much about how stigma impacts those who are struggling, and why people with mental illnesses are often reluctant to self-identify. We as a society have much work to do to allow people with mental health challenges to feel it’s okay to talk about their illness, and to seek care.” *(Note, your org’s spokesperson can insert a unique quote here if they’d like to.)*

The Let’s Talk Colorado campaign stresses there is no right or wrong words to use when talking to someone struggling with mental illness. Instead, the campaign emphasizes to be “present” when talking with someone with mental illness and to consider offering tangible, specific help. For example, instead of asking, “What can I do to help?” say, “I’d like to bring you dinner tonight. I will drop it off at 5 pm. Will you be home then?”

“Through our focus groups we learned that intent is much more important than specific language,” Douglas said. “People with mental illnesses – like everyone – need to be able to see and feel that you really do care, that your interaction with them is sincere.”

Besides *(your org’s name*), other agencies involved in the coalition that launched Let’s Talk Colorado include the Tri County Health Department, 9Health Fair, Aurora Mental Health Center, Boulder County Public Health, Broomfield Public Health, Centura/Denver South Group, Children’s Hospital Colorado, Clinica Family Health, ClinicNet, Community Reach Center, Denver Public Health, Doctors Care, Douglas County Government, Jefferson Center for Mental Health, Jefferson County Public Health, Mental Health Center of Denver, Metro Community Provider Network, SCL Health, Sheridan Health Services and West Pines Behavioral Health.

For more information on the campaign, and for links to the campaign’s materials and resources, go to [LetsTalkCO.org](http://www.letstalkco.org/).