

**TEANECK STIGMA-FREE | MISSION**

**What is a mental illness?**

Mental illnesses refer to disorders generally characterized by dysregulation of mood, thought, and/or behavior. Mental illness encompasses a variety of disorders ranging from depression and anxiety to substance and alcohol use disorder and bipolar disorder. Mental illnesses can affect persons of any age, race, religion, or income.

**What is stigma?**

Stigma is a mark of disgrace which results from the judgment by others. When an individual is labelled by their illness, they experience judgment and prejudice. Stigma brings experiences and feelings of shame, embarrassment, distress, hopelessness, and reluctance to seek or accept help. As a result, stigma is the primary reason individuals do not seek help when they experience symptoms of mental illness.

**What is Teaneck Stigma-Free Mission?**

The township of Teaneck in the state of New Jersey’s Bergen County **Stigma-Free Campaign** is a town-wide program which aims to reduce the stigma associated with mental illness. We are dedicated to raising awareness of the disease of mental illness and create a culture wherein residents who have the disease feel supported by their community and neighbors and feel free to seek treatment for the disease without fear of stigma.

**Teaneck Stigma-Free Zone Resolution**

***WHEREAS****,* the Teaneck Stigma-Free Advisory Board, the Township of Teaneck Council and the Township Manager along with the Township Department of Health Services and Teaneck Office of Social Serves supports the designation of **Stigma-Free Zones** in every municipality, and;

***WHEREAS****,* at the January 23, 2023 quarterly meeting of the Teaneck Stigma-Free Advisory Board(SFAB), members which includes Teaneck Health Officer and Social Service Coordinator is working collaboratively to establish a Stigma Free Zone in Teaneck, and;

***WHEREAS***, the members of the SFAB supports the county, state and national initiatives and recognized that the initiatives were aligned with the board’s mission to raise awareness of the disease of mental illness, and;

***WHEREAS****,* the National Institute of Mental Health reports that 1 in 4 adults experiences mental illness in a given year and 1 in 17 adults live with a serious mental illness such as schizophrenia, major depression, or bipolar disorder; approximately 20% of youth ages 13 to 18 and 13% of youth ages 8 to 15 experience severe mental disorders in a given year, and;

***WHEREAS***, the stigma associated with the disease of mental illness is identified as the primary reason individuals fail to seek the help they need to recover from the disease, and;

***WHEREAS****,* ***Stigma-Free Zones*** aim to inspire public interest and open dialogues about stigma, raise awareness of the disease of mental illness and create a culture wherein residents who have the disease of mental illness feel supported by their community and neighbors and feel free to seek treatment for the disease without fear of stigma and;

***WHEREAS****,* promoting awareness that there can be no “health” without mental health will break down barriers and encourage residents of all ages to be mindful of their mental health and ask for help when needed, and;

***WHEREAS****,* local resources are available to treat the disease of mental illness so no one resident in Teaneck needs to suffer alone or feel hopeless, and;

***WHEREAS****,* establishing **Stigma-Free Zones** will raise awareness of resources and encourage Teaneck residents to engage in care as soon as the need is identified so recovery can begin, hope is inspired and tragedies are avoided, and;

***NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED*** that Teaneck recognizes the community needs and supports the efforts of the SFAB of Teaneck designating Teaneck as a **Stigma-Free Zone**.