Nearly one quarter of persons with HIV/AIDS were in need of treatment for alcohol use or illicit drugs. 60% of premature deaths in persons with serious mental illnesses are due to preventable and treatable medical conditions. Persons with serious mental illnesses have health care costs that are 2 to 3 times higher than the general public.

**Behavioral health is public health**

- Behavioral health refers to people living with mental and/or substance abuse disorders (including serious mental illness).
- 60% of premature deaths in persons with serious mental illnesses are due to preventable and treatable medical conditions.  
- Nearly one quarter of persons with HIV/AIDS were in need of treatment for alcohol use or illicit drugs.
- Persons with serious mental illnesses have health care costs that are 2 to 3 times higher than the general public.

**Barriers to effective healthcare are due to:**

- **Patient factors** include health risk factors and lifestyle factors; side effects of medications and the effects of mental illness; higher pain threshold or reduced sensitivity to pain; suspiciousness or fear; self-neglect; lack of motivation; socio-economic factors; and difficulties in communicating health needs.
- **Provider factors** such as competing demands, time and resource constraints; negative attitudes towards people with mental illnesses and addictions; and lack of education/awareness.
- **System Factors** include the geographic, managerial and resource separation of facilities; lack of clarity as to who takes responsibility for the physical health of patients with mental illnesses; lack of continuity of care; and under-resourcing of mental healthcare that provides little opportunity for specialists to focus on issues outside their core specialty.

**Suicide**

- Suicide is ranked as the 3rd leading cause of death for youth 10-14 and 2nd leading cause among people 15-34 years of age.

- 91 Americans die every day from an opioid overdose.

- The rate of tobacco use among people with mental disorders is nearly 1.5x that of the general population.
What does a public health approach to behavioral health look like?

- Integration of primary and behavioral health services
- Increased use of health information technology
- Public education programming like Mental Health First Aid USA®
- Peer involvement
- Trauma-informed services
- Integration of behavioral health programs into schools
- Family education
- Peer involvement
- Increased prevention efforts
- Recovery-oriented services

What does success look like?

- Decreased risk of adverse outcomes including hospital admissions
- Improved overall health for persons with mental and/or substance abuse disorders
- Reduced health care costs
- Decreased discrimination of people with mental and/or substance abuse disorders
- Improved care for individuals with mental and/or substance abuse disorders
- Healthy communities
- Strong minds
- Increased access to care
- Trauma resilient communities

Sources: