



# Mental Health

## Discussion Guide

### Let's review

*At the start of each discussion, review the conversation ground rules for returning and new members alike to set the stage for active participation by all. You may want to use a timer as you go around the room. And don't forget to decide who will take notes and post a discussion recap.*

- **Be open and curious:** Everyone has a unique perspective, so listen and be prepared to hear a different point of view. Remember, you do not need to share your political affiliation; this is a discussion and exchange of ideas, not politics.
- **Be respectful and engaged:** Be sure that everyone has a chance to speak before adding a second comment or perspective. Encourage each other's participation.
- **Be focused and concise:** Keep the conversation centered on the issue and the brief.

**The "Table-it" Rule:** If the group has gone off-topic but the area is of interest, the group can table the conversation and save it for another time to be addressed in a different manner.

### Let's begin

- Take five minutes to walk through the brief. Highlight the main point of each section and key statistics.
- Each member is invited to answer the following questions in a **two-three minute reaction** to the brief:
  - Introduce yourself, and share what "lens of care" did you wear when reviewing this brief (e.g. personal, professional, community, state, nation, global)?
  - What did you find most interesting or surprising from reading the brief? What matters?

### Spread the word: facts to share during your discussion

- Approximately [51.5 million U.S. adults \(20%\)](#) experience mental illness each year, but fewer than half receive treatment.
- The 2021 Department of Health and Human Services [budget](#) allocates over \$2.5 billion in block grants to states.
- Lost productivity due to depression and anxiety [costs](#) the global economy an estimated \$1 trillion annually, but every \$1 spent on evidence-based care for depression and anxiety generates \$5 in return.

## Let's discuss

Below are 3 questions for the group to consider and discuss, or choose your own.

- **Community:** What challenges and factors should individual communities consider when addressing mental health? How does mental illness most impact our community? What are local groups doing to address this?
- **Government:** What should government priorities be when it comes to addressing mental health? What does this look like at the federal, state, and local levels?
- **Business:** What is your experience with mental health policies at your place of work?

## Let's act

1. **Take it local. Talk to your neighbors** to identify the status of mental issues in your community. Identify a group of peers from your neighborhood, school, or office and host a conversation. If someone is in crisis or needs access to care, visit [NAMI's site](#).
2. **Explore the impact of mental health care laws in your community.** Search for [your state's laws](#) relating to mental health care. See how much your state receives in [SAMHSA grants](#).
3. **Gain Better Understanding of Access and Coverage.** Visit [APA Guide](#) and the [Parity Tracker](#) to learn more.
4. **Investigate community programs in your state or municipality.** What [state associations](#) or [local organizations](#) exist?
5. **Research your elected representatives' positions** on policies relating to mental health, and their vision for how to tackle mental health care challenges facing Americans and your community. [Here are tips](#) about what to ask and how to learn more about candidates and elected official's positions on mental health. Find contact information for federal, state, and local government officials [here](#). Your state or municipality's websites will also have information to contact leaders. Try looking at the drop-down menu for a *Government* tab.
6. **Establish a relationship with your legislators.** It's easy to establish a relationship with your legislators. Start by introducing yourself. You can also learn to write to your representatives or set up a meeting with a legislator on [The Policy Circle website](#).
7. **Consider writing a letter to the editor or an op-ed on your stance on policies related to mental health in your local paper.** Learn how on [The Policy Circle website](#).

## Next Steps for Your Circle

- **Post a Recap:** Summarize your discussion to share thoughts with members not present, and share planned actions from group members. Designate who will post a meeting recap on your circle page.
- **Decide your next meeting topic.** Want to discuss a related brief at your next meeting? Suggestions include:
  - [Healthcare](#)
  - [Health Disparities](#)
  - [The Opioid Epidemic](#)
- **Dive Deeper into the issues.** If this is an area you would like to pursue further, consider taking possible steps to influence policy. The Policy Circle offers resources for [developing a message about your issue](#) and [organizing a petition](#) to amplify your voice and raise awareness. Don't miss our [latest events](#) that help you dive deeper on this issue and more.