

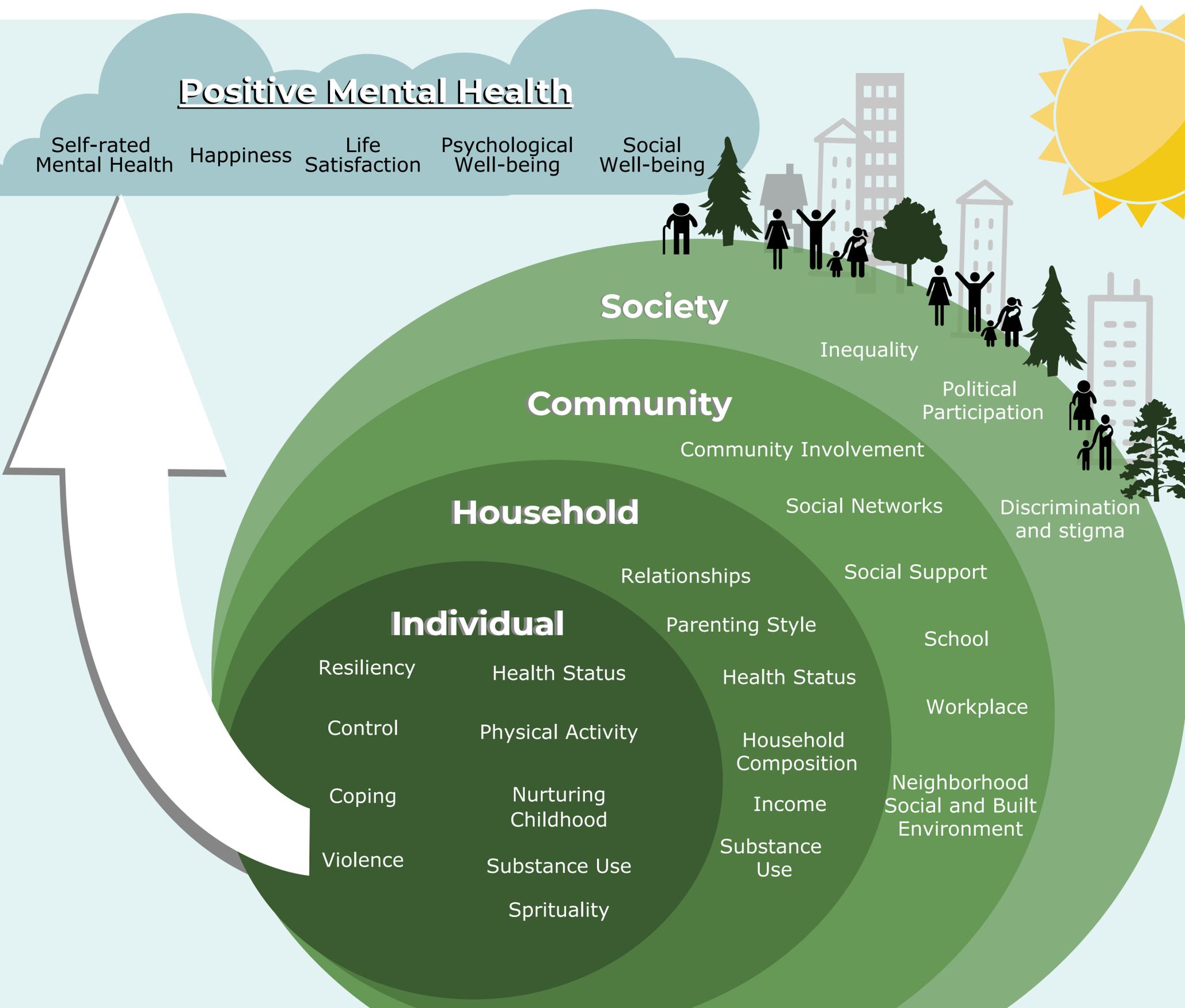
# Health Equity Brief

## Mental Health and Substance Use in Allegheny County



Issue 1, May 2018

### What Influences Positive Mental Health?



### The Social-Ecological Model and Mental Health

As with good physical health, good mental health is critical to overall well-being. Social determinants of health contribute to well-being, as demonstrated by the social-ecological model above. There are individual, household, community and society-level factors which influence positive mental health.

Figure above adapted from: Public Health Agency of Canada

# Mental Health in Allegheny County\*

In Allegheny County, a high proportion of people report that they have some type of mental health challenge:

**42%** reported some type of stress, depression, and/or emotional problems in the past month<sup>^</sup>

**23%** reported that they are limited by their mental or physical health in the past month<sup>^^</sup>

**21%** reported ever having depressive disorder

**5%** reported extreme psychological distress

## Disparities in Self-Reported Mental Health Challenges

### Limited by Mental or Physical Health

 **25%** of non-Hispanic Blacks  
vs.  
**23%** of non-Hispanic Whites

**Race**

### Psychological Distress

 **16%** w/o a high school degree  
vs.  
**2%** w/ a college degree

**Education**

### Mental Health Challenges

 **62%** of those making <\$15,000  
vs.  
**37%** of those making >\$75,000

**Income**

### Depressive Disorder

 **26%** of females  
vs.  
**16%** of males

**Gender**

 **Disparities Explained Race, Income, Education & Gender**  
Those with lower income and education, as well as non-Hispanic Black residents, reported more of these mental health challenges. Women reported experiencing more mental health challenges than men.

*\*All data for the section "Mental Health in Allegheny County" come from Allegheny County Survey Data 2015-16 (<http://www.achd.net/biostats/brfss.html>)*

<sup>^</sup>Now thinking about your mental health, which includes stress, depression, and problems with emotions, for how many days during the past 30 days was your mental health not good?; <sup>^^</sup>During the past 30 days, for about how many days did poor physical or mental health keep you from doing your usual activities, such as self-care, work, or recreation?

## Access to Mental Health Services\*\*

### The Big Picture

Not all emotional distress warrants treatment, but when mental health challenges start to interfere with your life, it is wise to get help. Sometimes gaining access to health care services for mental health can be difficult.

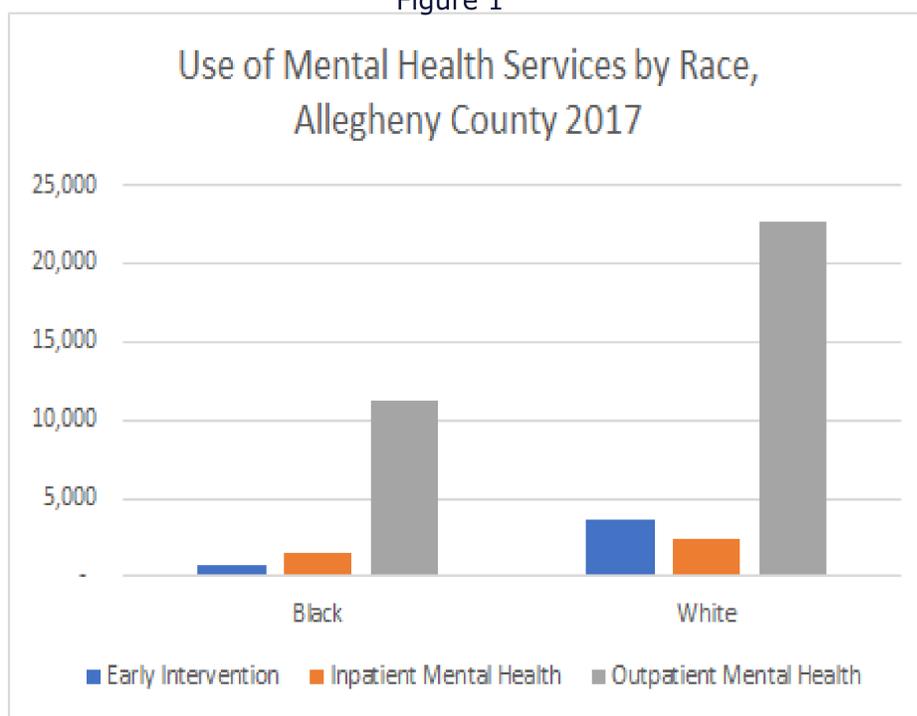
However, because of national policies such as the Affordable Care Act, access to services is improving. Data show that after Pennsylvania expanded Medicaid insurance, those who used behavioral health services were mostly White, male and younger aged (18-32), compared to traditional Medicaid service users who were mostly White, female, and older (between 45-64 years of age). Overall, Medicaid expansion increased access to behavioral health services.

[http://www.ahci.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/The\\_Impact\\_of\\_Medicaid\\_Expansion\\_FINAL.pdf?s=9936697C6F6E111145F27614A16F3A55C333D482](http://www.ahci.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/The_Impact_of_Medicaid_Expansion_FINAL.pdf?s=9936697C6F6E111145F27614A16F3A55C333D482)

While these estimates do not fully capture all mental health service use in Allegheny County, data from the Department of Health and Human Services (Figure 1) show that mental health service use and early intervention (number of visits) is higher among White residents when compared to Black. These numbers are comparable to those receiving Medicaid insurance in the US.

*\*\*All data for the section come from Allegheny Department of Human Services*

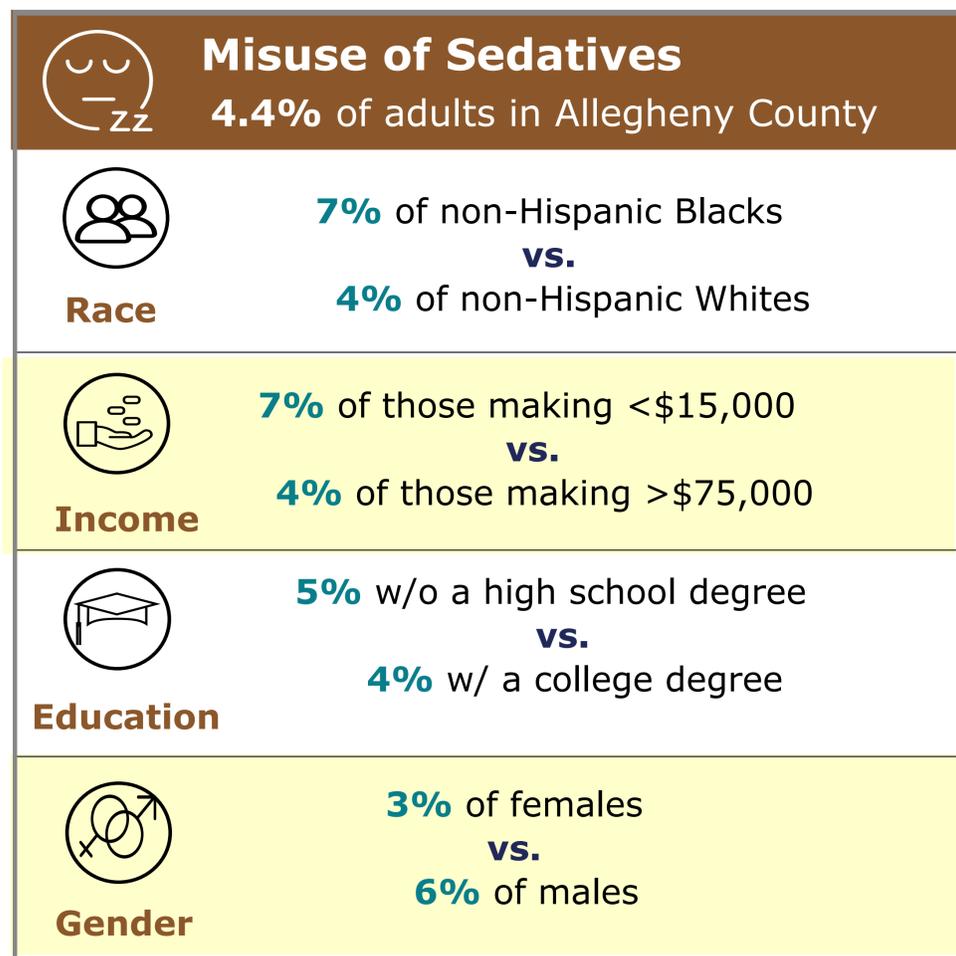
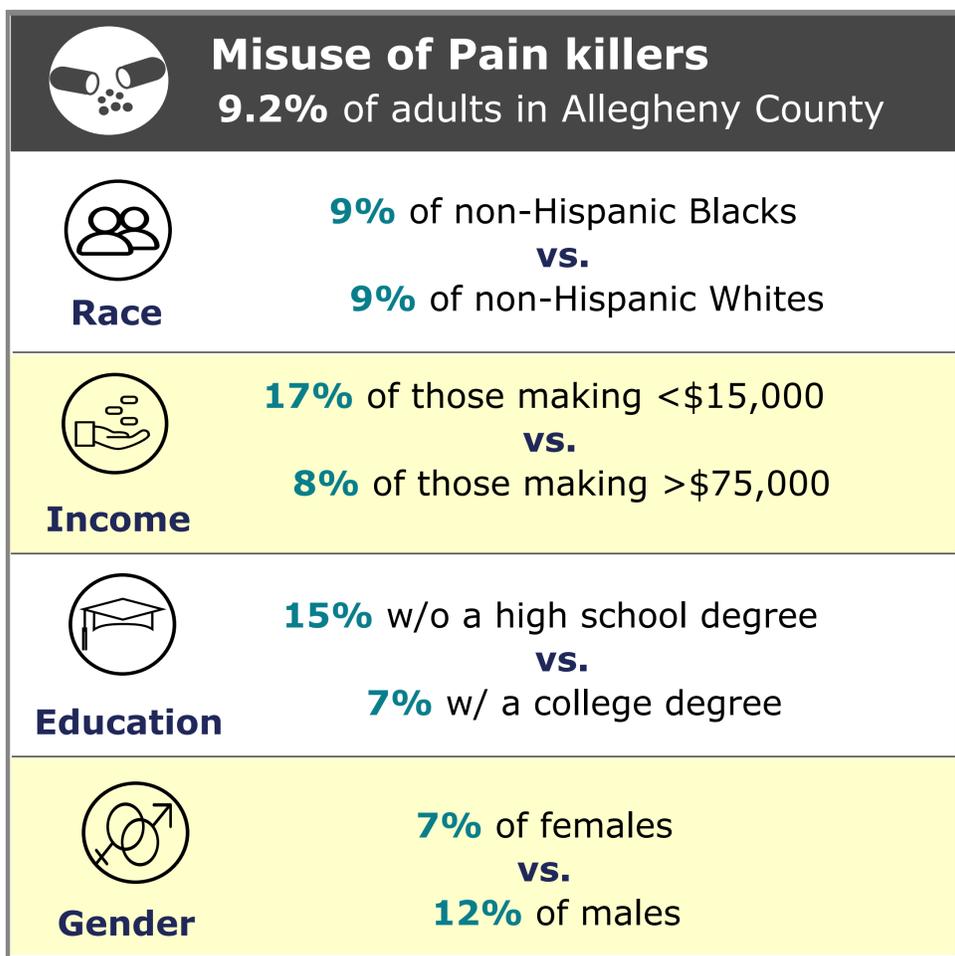
Figure 1



# Substance Abuse in Allegheny County\*

## The Big Picture

Misuse of prescription drugs is defined as taking pain killers/sedatives that were prescribed for someone else or used more than the recommended amount when they were prescribed. In Allegheny County, 9.2% reported misusing painkillers and 4.4% misused sedatives.

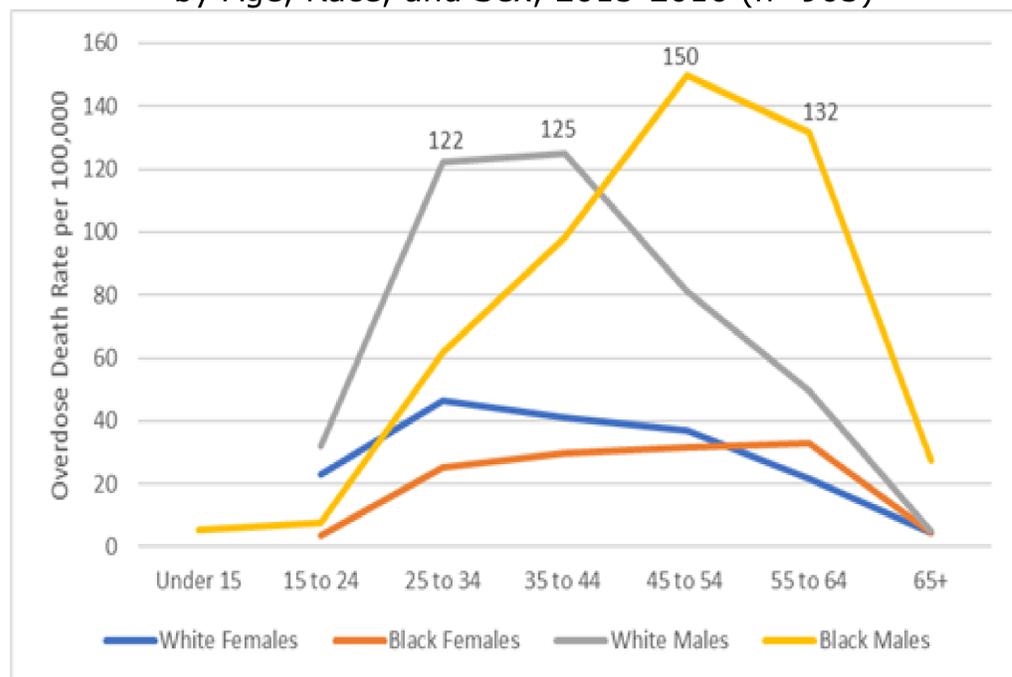


\*All data for the section "Substance Use in Allegheny County" come from Allegheny County Survey Data 2015-16 (<http://www.achd.net/biostats/brfss.html>)

There was no significant difference for use of pain killers by race. There was no significant difference for use of sedatives by income or education.

## Opioid Overdose Deaths in Allegheny County\*\*

Figure 2: Opioid Overdose Death Rate in Allegheny County, by Age, Race, and Sex, 2015-2016 (n=903)



### Disparity

Recent attention has focused on opioid drug use, including heroin and fentanyl. Much emphasis has been on how this epidemic affects White populations and data from Figure 2 (left) show very high rates of overdose for younger White men (aged 25-44). Unfortunately, these recent data also show high rates of overdose for older Black men (aged 45+).

\*\*All data for the section "Overdose Deaths in Allegheny County" come from DHS report <https://www.alleghenycountyanalytics.us/index.php/2018/02/15/opioid-related-overdose-deaths-allegheny-county-report-data-visualizations/>

# Takeaways



## Disparities

In Allegheny County, a large percentage of people reported having some mental health challenges. Blacks and those with lower income and education, report having more challenges.



## Prevention & Treatment

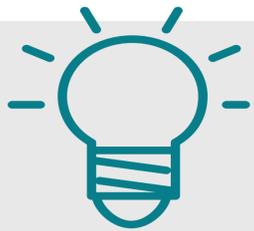
You can still be healthy even if you have mental illness as long as it is managed. If mental health problems or substance use start to interfere with your life, seek treatment.



## Health

Good mental health, along with physical health are essential components to overall well-being. Treatment for mental health challenges is improving and available as part of most insurance plans.

## What is Allegheny County Doing to Close the Gaps?



**The Plan for Healthy Allegheny (PHA)**, outlines strategies which attempt to address mental health challenges discussed in this brief in Allegheny County

**Goal:** Reduce mortality and morbidity related to mental health and substance use disorders.

**5.1.1-5** Increase utilization of outpatient behavioral health services, particularly for the most vulnerable populations.

**5.3.1-4** Increase the number of adult medical providers integrating behavioral health in their practices.

**5.5.1-4** Decrease the number of opiate-related drug overdose deaths.



## Action Items

- **Co-locate services** to maximize resources and increase access to treatment
- **Promote culturally-appropriate treatment** that acknowledges consumers' beliefs about mental health and increases sense of comfort
- **Learn mental health first aid** ([www.mentalhealthfirstaid.org](http://www.mentalhealthfirstaid.org))
- **Volunteer for a Trauma Response Team** ([www.FocusPgh.org](http://www.FocusPgh.org))
- **Support services for ex-offenders** (e.g., housing, jobs, and benefits)
- **Conduct health impact assessments** to analyze the impacts of public decisions on mental health ([www.cdc.gov/healthyplaces/hia.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/healthyplaces/hia.htm))
- **Learn more about the opioid epidemic** and what you can do (<http://www.achd.net/overdoseprevention/>)

## Resources & More Information

### More ACHS Results



<http://www.achd.net/biostats/brfss.html>

### PHA Dashboard



<http://www.achd.net/pha/>

### Allegheny Link



<http://alleghenycounty.us/Human-Services/About/Contact/Allegheny-Link.aspx>

### Contact Us



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