Mental Health Matters

Center for Persons With Disabilities

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MENTAL HEALTH MATTERS

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Recent data from the Center for Mental Health Services indicates that 1 in 4 people will experience a serious mental illness at some point in their life. Unfortunately, people with mental illness are at greater risk of experiencing stigma from those who don't fully understand the condition.

Stigma is when someone judges you based on a single, personal trait, such as someone making a negative remark about your mental illness or your treatment. It may be subtle, such as someone assuming you could be unstable, violent or dangerous because you have a mental health condition. Some of the harmful effects of stigma can include a lack of understanding by family, friends, or colleagues; discrimination at work or school; bullying or harassment; or inadequate health insurance coverage.

One of the ways to deal with these stigmas is to speak out against it. Express your opinions at events, in letters to the editor or on the Internet. It can help instill courage in others facing similar challenges and educate the public about mental illness.

To this end, the Utah Disability Law Center is launching a multimedia anti-stigma campaign over the coming months that asks people to "rethink mental illness." The campaign will be seen and heard on local television and radio, as well as appear on outdoor billboards and in print.

On February 8, 2012, there is a great opportunity to learn about how to become a strong advocate and learn how to speak with Utah legislators about mental health issues. This event is sponsored by the National Alliance on Mental Health and the Utah Disability Law Center.

We hope that you will take an opportunity to learn more about mental health issues and join in advocating for people living with mental illness and their families.