

Youth & Young Adult Edition

ADVOCATING FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE ISSUES

Mental Health Awareness



**Silence
the ~~Shame~~**

www.silencetheshame.com



UNDERSTANDING SOCIAL JUSTICE ISSUES

Social Justice refers to the fair and just distribution of resources, opportunities, and privileges within a society. It aims to address inequalities and promote the rights of marginalized groups. Some key social justice issues include:

- **Racial Equality:** Ensuring that people of all races have the same rights and opportunities and fighting against racism and discrimination.
- **Climate Change:** Addressing the environmental crisis caused by human activities, leading to global warming, extreme weather, and loss of biodiversity.
- **Gender Equality:** Promoting equal rights and opportunities for all genders, including issues like pay equity and representation.
- **Mental Health Awareness:** Raising awareness about mental health issues, reducing stigma, and improving access to mental health resources.
- **LGBTQ+ Rights:** Advocating for the rights of LGBTQ+ individuals to live freely and without discrimination based on their sexual orientation or gender identity.
- **Access to Education:** Ensuring that everyone has the opportunity to receive quality education, regardless of their background or financial situation.
- **Gun Control:** Implementing laws and regulations to manage the sale and ownership of firearms to enhance public safety.
- **Women's Rights:** Advocating for women's rights to make choices about their bodies and lives, including issues like reproductive rights and protection against violence.
- **Economic Inequality:** Addressing the gap between the wealthy and the poor, focusing on fair wages and access to economic opportunities.
- **Immigrant Rights:** Supporting the rights of immigrants to live and work in a new country without facing discrimination or unfair treatment.

ADVOCACY IN ACTION



Examples of Advocacy for Various Issues —

Advocacy can take many forms and be applied to various social justice issues. Here are some examples:

- **Environmental Advocacy:** Youth-led climate strikes, like the Fridays for Future movement, where students skip school to demand action on climate change from their governments.
- **Gun Control Advocacy:** The March for Our Lives movement, initiated by students from Parkland, Florida, after a school shooting, advocating for stricter gun control laws.
- **Racial Justice Advocacy:** The Black Lives Matter movement, which protests against systemic racism and police brutality, organizing rallies and educational campaigns to raise awareness.
- **LGBTQ+ Rights Advocacy:** Pride parades and campaigns like the It Gets Better Project, which aim to support LGBTQ+ youth and promote acceptance and equality.
- **Mental Health Advocacy:** Campaigns like Mental Health Awareness Month, where organizations promote education, resources, and support for mental health issues through events and social media.
- **Education Equity Advocacy:** Movements advocating for equitable funding for schools in low-income areas, such as the #FundOurSchools campaign, which calls for increased investment in public education.



MENTAL HEALTH ADVOCACY

Mental Health Advocacy involves raising awareness and promoting policies that improve mental health care access and reduce stigma. Community advocates play a crucial role in this process by:

- **Educating others** about mental health and the challenges faced by people experiencing mental illness or substance use disorders.
- **Supporting those in need** by connecting them to resources.
- **Advocating for policy change** to improve access and the quality of care of mental health services.

Community advocates help amplify the voices of those affected by mental health. They create safe spaces for discussions, promote understanding, and work towards systemic changes that benefit everyone.

MENTAL HEALTH STATISTICS

10TH

SUICIDE IS THE 10TH LEADING CAUSE OF DEATH IN THE U.S.

This highlights the critical need for mental health support.

40 MILLION

ANXIETY DISORDERS AFFECT 40 MILLION ADULTS

This statistic shows that anxiety is common and often goes untreated.

50%

50% OF ALL LIFETIME MENTAL ILLNESSES BEGIN BY AGE 14

Early intervention is crucial for better outcomes.

41%

ONLY 41% OF ADULTS WITH A MENTAL HEALTH CONDITION RECEIVED SERVICES IN THE PAST YEAR

This indicates a significant gap in access to care.

5X

LGBTQ YOUTH ARE ALMOST FIVE TIMES MORE LIKELY TO ATTEMPT SUICIDE

This statistic shows that anxiety is common and often goes untreated.

1 IN 5

1 IN 5 ADULTS EXPERIENCE MENTAL ILLNESS EACH YEAR

Mental health issues are prevalent, affecting many in our communities.

1 IN 6

1 IN 6 YOUTH AGED 6-17 EXPERIENCE A MENTAL HEALTH DISORDER EACH YEAR

Young people are not immune to mental health challenges.

1 IN 4

1 IN 4 YOUNG ADULTS AGED 18-24 CONSIDERED SUICIDE DUE TO THE PANDEMIC

The pandemic has exacerbated mental health issues, especially among young people.



MENTAL HEALTH

DISPARITIES

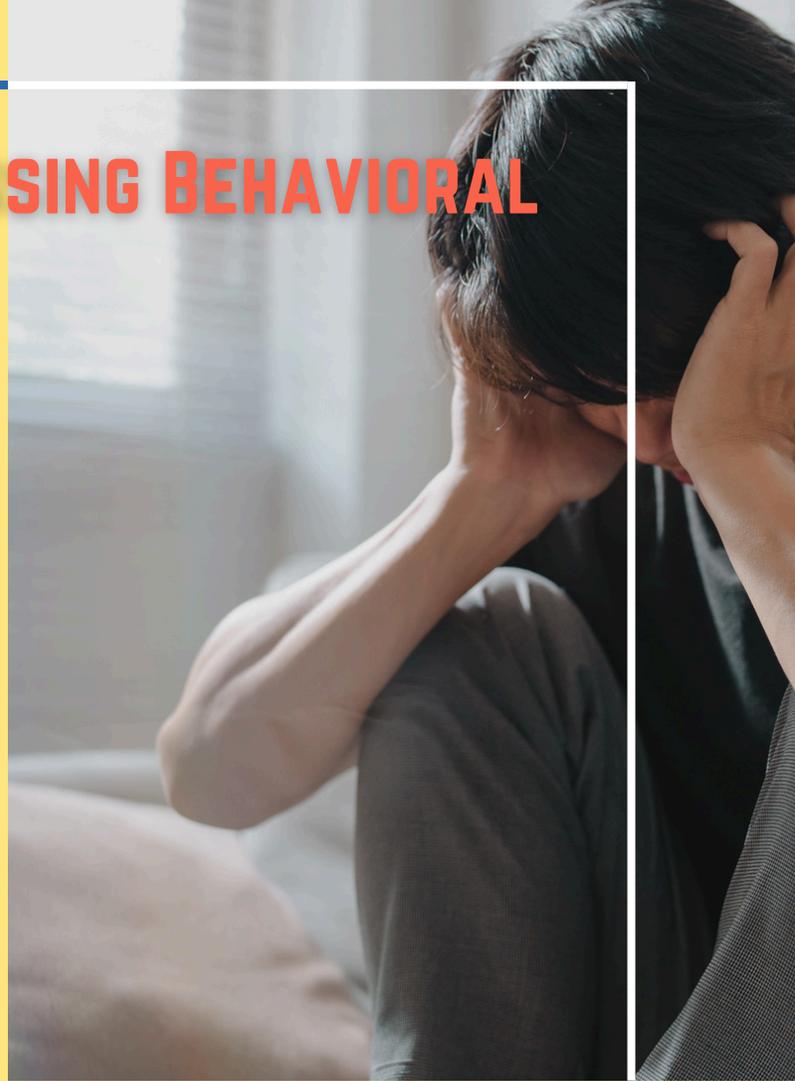


Mental health disparities refer to the differences in access to mental health care and outcomes among different population groups. For example:

- Racial and ethnic minorities often face barriers to accessing mental health services due to stigma, lack of providers, and cultural misunderstandings.
- LGBTQ+ individuals may experience discrimination in healthcare settings, leading to inadequate support.

BARRIERS TO ACCESSING BEHAVIORAL HEALTH CARE

- **Cost:** Many people can't afford therapy or medication because they lack insurance or have high out-of-pocket expenses.
- **Availability:** There aren't enough mental health professionals in certain areas, especially in rural or underserved communities.
- **Transportation:** Some individuals have difficulty traveling to appointments, whether due to lack of transportation or distance.
- **Stigma:** People may feel embarrassed or ashamed to seek help due to negative beliefs about mental health.
- **Lack of Awareness:** Some don't know that they need help or that mental health services are available to them.
- **Cultural Differences:** Cultural beliefs and values may discourage individuals from seeking mental health care or make them feel misunderstood.



- **Language Barriers:** Non-native speakers may struggle to find professionals who speak their language or understand their cultural context.
- **Complexity of the System:** Navigating insurance, finding providers, and understanding treatment options can be confusing and overwhelming.
- **Work and time constraints:** Busy schedules or lack of flexible hours can make it hard for people to make appointments.
- **Previous negative experiences:** Past bad experiences with mental health services can deter individuals from trying again.



KEY ADVOCACY SKILLS

STORYTELLING:

Crafting a compelling narrative allows advocates to highlight the impact of their cause, making complex issues more relatable and understandable. By weaving facts and emotions together, storytellers can inspire action and foster a deeper connection between their audience and the subject at hand. Whether through anecdotes, testimonials, or case studies, effective storytelling can break down barriers and create a sense of empathy and urgency that drives change.

COMMUNICATION:

Effective communication not only conveys the importance of the cause but also empowers others to engage and participate. It involves listening actively, expressing ideas succinctly, and adapting messages to resonate with diverse audiences. . By fostering an environment of openness and understanding, advocates can bridge gaps and build consensus, paving the way for collaborative solutions and sustained progress.

RELATIONSHIP BUILDING:

Building trust requires consistency, transparency, and a genuine commitment to the community's needs and values. Advocates should strive to be reliable partners by following through on promises and being open about their intentions and limitations. Engaging with community members in meaningful ways, such as through regular meetings, workshops, or participatory events, can help establish a foundation of trust. Furthermore, showing respect for local knowledge and expertise, and incorporating it into advocacy strategies, demonstrates a dedication to collaborative and sustainable change.



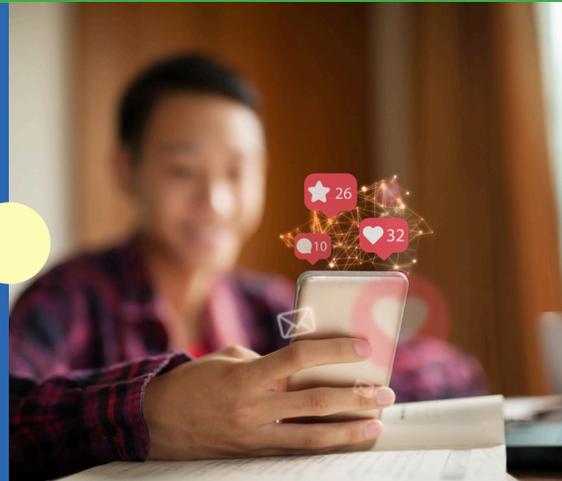
ADVOCACY STRATEGIES

Here are some strategies to advocate for mental health awareness:

SOCIAL MEDIA CAMPAIGNS:

Use platforms like Instagram or TikTok to spread awareness and share resources.

Example: Create a hashtag campaign to share personal stories and mental health tips.



COLLABORATIVE ART PROJECTS:

Engage with local artists to create murals or installations that highlight mental health themes.

Example: Host a community art day where people can express their feelings about mental health through art.

PETITIONS AND LETTER CAMPAIGNS:

Gather signatures to support mental health funding or policy changes.

Example: Start a petition for increased mental health resources in schools.



FORMING ALLIANCES WITH LOCAL ORGANIZATIONS:

Partner with mental health organizations to amplify your voice.

Example: Collaborate with Silence the Shame to host awareness events.



PUBLIC SPEAKING ENGAGEMENTS:

Share your story at community events or school assemblies to raise awareness.

Example: Speak at a school assembly about the importance of mental health.

CIVIC ENGAGEMENT INITIATIVES:

Encourage peers to participate in local government and advocacy efforts.

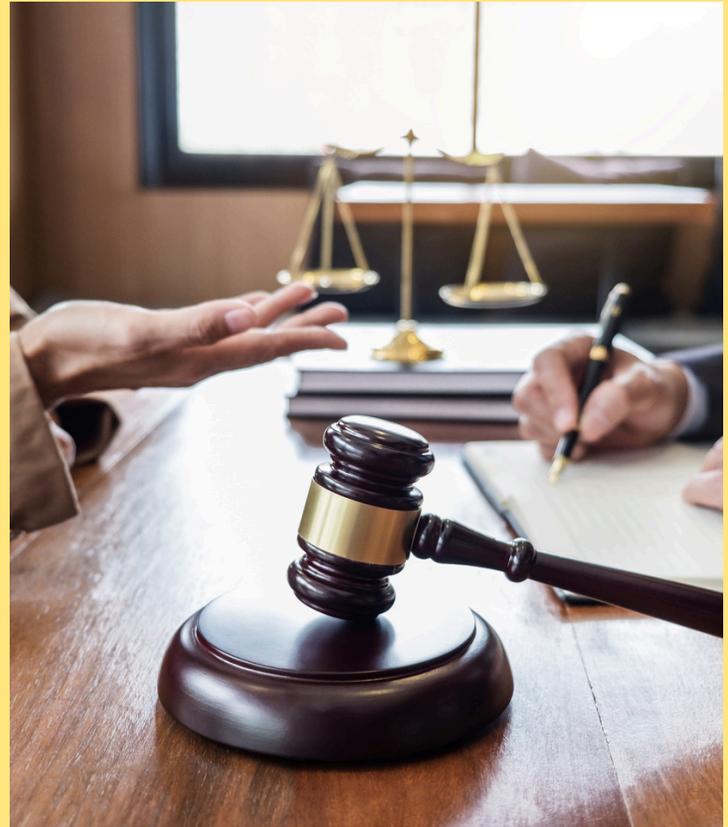
Example: Host a workshop on how to engage with local policymakers.



ADDRESSING MENTAL HEALTH DISPARITIES

To address disparities, consider these steps:

1. **Research:** Understand the specific mental health issues affecting your community.
2. **Craft Messages:** Develop clear and impactful messages based on your research.
3. **Execute Strategy:** Implement your advocacy strategy through various channels.



TIPS FOR TALKING WITH YOUR LEGISLATOR

1. **Use Proper Title:** Always address your legislator by their correct title (e.g., Senator, Representative).
2. **Engage in Small Talk:** If offered, use casual conversation to build rapport.
3. **Share Your Personal Story:** Personal stories can be powerful in illustrating the need for change.
4. **Act as a Partner:** Approach discussions collaboratively rather than confrontationally.
5. **Listen:** Be open to hearing your legislator's perspective.

CALL TO ACTION

A call to action is crucial to your advocacy efforts, especially when engaging with your legislator. It encourages them to take specific steps toward supporting mental health initiatives. Here are some effective calls to action you can use:



REQUEST SUPPORT FOR SPECIFIC LEGISLATION:

Ask your legislator to support or sponsor a bill that addresses mental health funding or access to services.

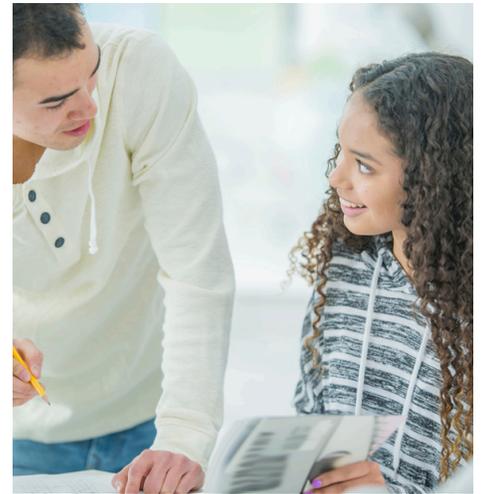
"I urge you to support Bill XYZ, which aims to increase funding for mental health services in our schools."



ENCOURAGE COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT:

Invite your legislator to participate in local mental health awareness events or town halls.

"I would love for you to join our upcoming mental health awareness event to hear directly from constituents about their needs."



ADVOCATE FOR POLICY CHANGES:

Ask your legislator to advocate for policies that improve mental health care access and equity.

"Please consider advocating for policies that ensure all students have access to mental health resources in schools."



PROMOTE MENTAL HEALTH EDUCATION:

Encourage your legislator to support initiatives that promote mental health education in schools and communities.

"I ask you to support programs that educate young people about mental health and reduce stigma."



FOLLOW UP ON COMMITMENTS:

If your legislator supports mental health initiatives, ask them to follow through on their commitments.

"Thank you for your support! I look forward to seeing how you advocate for mental health funding in the upcoming budget discussions."

FOLLOWING UP

Always send a thank-you note after meeting with a legislator to express gratitude and reinforce your message.



OVERVIEW OF THE GEORGIA GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Bicameral Legislature

Georgia's General Assembly consists of two chambers: the House of Representatives and the Senate.

Legislative Session

Typically starts on the second Monday in January and lasts 40 working days, ending in March or early April.

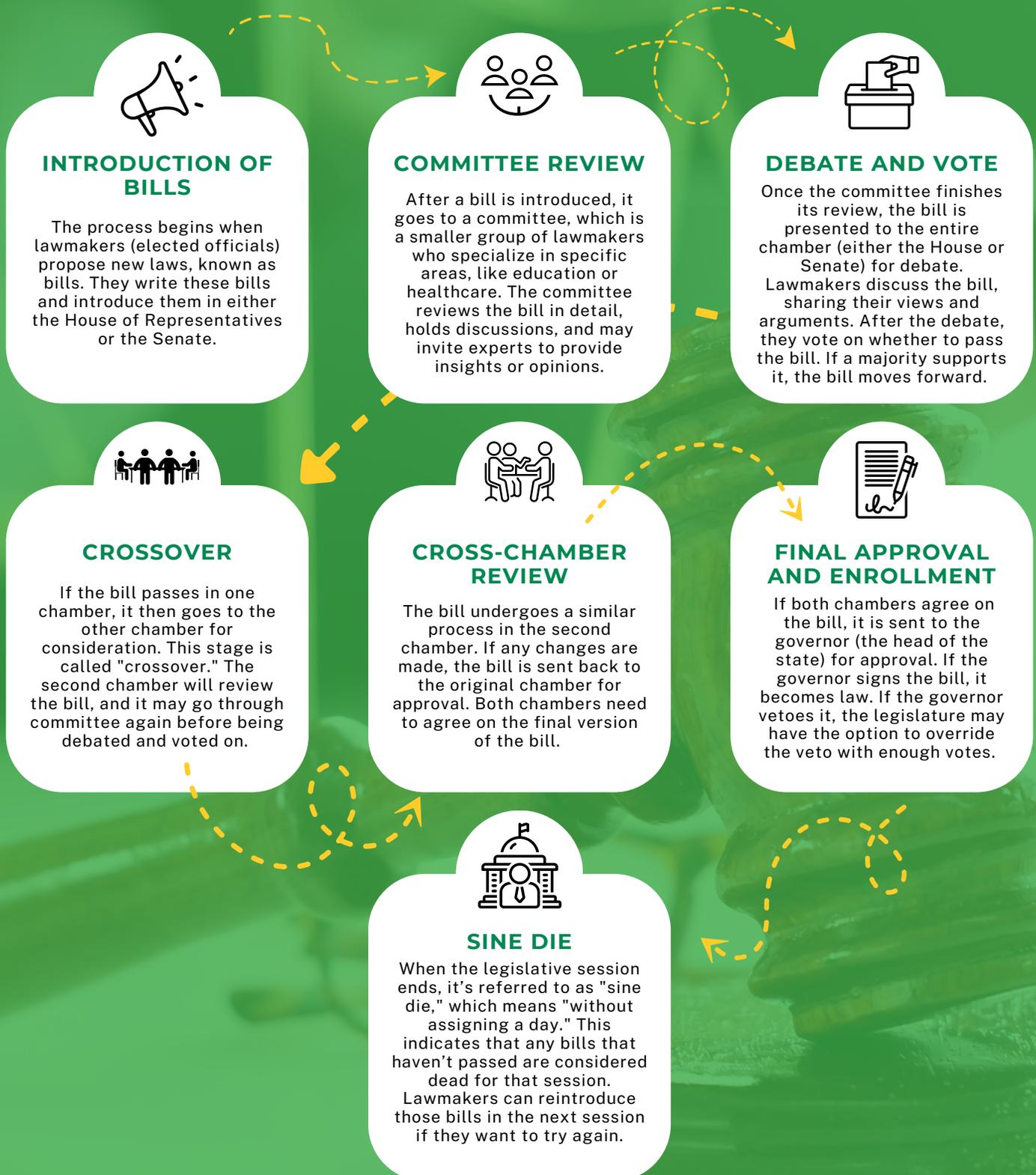
Legislative Elections

Members serve staggered terms;
House members serve two years;
Senators serve four years.



LEGISLATIVE PROCESS

The legislative process is a structured series of steps that bills (proposed laws) undergo from introduction to potential enactment.



IDENTIFYING YOUR LEGISLATOR IN GEORGIA

You can find out who your local and state legislators are through various online resources. Here are some key websites:

GEORGIA GENERAL ASSEMBLY

You can search for your representatives and learn about their policies based on your address.

[CLICK HERE](#)

USA.GOV

This comprehensive government website provides links to find federal, state, and local elected officials. Users can select their state and access information about their representatives.

[CLICK HERE](#)

VOTE.ORG

This provides a range of resources for voters, including a tool to find local and state legislators by entering your address. It also offers information on voting, registration, and upcoming elections.

[CLICK HERE](#)

BALLOTPEDIA

This is an encyclopedia of American politics. By entering your address, you can find information about your local and state legislators and upcoming elections and ballot measures.

[CLICK HERE](#)

OPENSTATES

This is a project of the Sunlight Foundation that provides a way to find state legislators based on addresses. It also offers information on legislative activities and bills being considered.

[CLICK HERE](#)



TIPS TO INCREASE CONFIDENCE IN ADVOCACY

01

Educate Yourself

Knowledge is power. Understand the issues you care about deeply. Understand your target audience, i.e., policymakers, community leaders, families, or school officials.

02

Create a plan

Create an advocacy plan that aligns with your target audience. Identify the strategy needed to achieve your intended outcome, such as increasing awareness, changing behavior, or changing policy.

03

Practice Your Delivery

Rehearse your message to build confidence. Write draft letters or petitions and receive feedback from others to ensure your message is clear.

04

Engage with Peers

Collaborate with friends or groups to share ideas and strategies. Identify others to amplify your message or build upon the goal. Join groups or clubs focused on mental health advocacy to build your network.

05

Start Small

Begin by advocating in your school or local community before moving to larger platforms. Every action doesn't require addressing official bodies. Find ways to raise awareness and promote change.

06

Celebrate Progress

Acknowledge small victories to stay motivated.

RESOURCES FOR MENTAL HEALTH IN GEORGIA



9-8-8:

NATIONAL SUICIDE PREVENTION LIFELINE

988 is a three-digit dialing code established in the United States to provide immediate support for individuals in mental health crises, including those experiencing suicidal thoughts or behaviors. This service connects callers to trained crisis counselors who can offer support, guidance, and resources 24/7.

Key Features of 988:

- **Accessibility:** The 988 hotline is available nationwide, making it easier for individuals to reach out for help without having to remember a longer phone number.
- **Confidential Support:** Calls to 988 are confidential, ensuring that individuals can seek help without fear of judgment or stigma.
- **Crisis Intervention:** Counselors are trained to assess the situation, provide emotional support, and help individuals develop a safety plan or connect them to local resources for further assistance.
- **Resource Connection:** In addition to immediate support, 988 can connect individuals to local mental health services, including therapy and counseling options.



UNDERSTANDING THE LANGUAGE

Access to Care	The ability of individuals to obtain necessary mental health services, which can be affected by factors such as availability, affordability, and awareness of services.
Advocacy	The act of supporting or promoting a cause or policy, particularly in the context of mental health rights and services.
Advocacy Coalition	A group of individuals or organizations that come together to advocate for a common goal or policy change in mental health.
Behavioral Health Access	Refers to the ability of individuals to obtain necessary mental health services and support.
Behavioral Health Care	This encompasses preventing, diagnosing, and treating mental health and substance use disorders.
Behavioral Health Equity	The principle that everyone should have access to the same quality of mental health care, regardless of their background.
Crisis Intervention	Immediate and short-term assistance provided to individuals experiencing a mental health crisis, aimed at stabilizing the situation and connecting them to appropriate resources.
Cultural Competence	The ability of healthcare providers to understand, communicate with, and effectively interact with individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds, particularly in the context of mental health.
Informed Consent	The process of obtaining permission from a patient or client before conducting a healthcare intervention, ensuring they understand the risks and benefits involved.
Integrated Care	A coordinated approach to healthcare that combines mental health services with primary care, ensuring comprehensive treatment for individuals.

Mental Health	This refers to our emotional, psychological, and social well-being. It affects how we think, feel, and act.
Mental Health Literacy	The knowledge and understanding of mental health issues, including the ability to recognize symptoms, understand treatment options, and know how to seek help.
Mental Illness	A condition that affects a person's thinking, feeling, behavior, or mood. Examples include depression, anxiety disorders, and schizophrenia.
Peer Support	A system of giving and receiving help based on shared experiences, where individuals with lived experience of mental health challenges support one another.
Policy Advocacy	Efforts to influence public policy and legislation related to mental health services, funding, and rights.
Recovery	A personal journey of healing and transformation, where individuals work towards improving their mental health and well-being, often involving the management of symptoms and the pursuit of personal goals.
Self-Advocacy	The ability of individuals to speak up for themselves and make informed decisions regarding their mental health care and treatment.
Stigma	A negative perception or discrimination against individuals with mental health conditions, often leading to social exclusion and barriers to seeking help.
Substance Use Disorders	These are conditions that result from the harmful use of psychoactive substances, including alcohol and illicit drugs.
Trauma-Informed Care	An approach to treatment that recognizes the impact of trauma on individuals and incorporates this understanding into all aspects of care.



MENTAL HEALTH ADVOCACY ORGANIZATIONS IN GEORGIA

- **Children's Healthcare of Atlanta:** Provides comprehensive pediatric healthcare services, including mental health resources and support for children and adolescents. Website: www.choa.org
- **Georgia Alliance of Community Hospitals:** Supports mental health services and advocacy within community hospitals across Georgia. Website: www.gach.org
- **Georgia Appleseed:** Advocates for systemic change to improve the lives of low-income individuals and families, including mental health access and services. Website: www.georgiaappleseed.org
- **Georgia Association of School Social Workers (GASSW):** Advocates for effective school social work practices and policies that support children's mental and emotional well-being in Georgia's schools. Website: www.gassw.org
- **Georgia Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities (DBHDD):** Government organization responsible for policies and providers regarding behavioral health. Website: www.dbhdd.georgia.gov
- **Georgia Mental Health Consumer Network (GMHCN):** A consumer-led organization supporting individuals living with mental health challenges with peer support, advocacy, and representation in policy decisions. Website: www.gmhcn.org
- **Georgia Parent Support Network:** Provides support and resources for families of children with mental health challenges, promoting understanding and advocacy. Website: www.gpsn.org
- **Georgians for a Healthy Future:** Focuses on health policy advocacy, including issues of access and equity in mental health. Website: www.georgiahealthcare.org
- **Healthy Mothers, Healthy Babies Coalition of Georgia:** Works to improve maternal and child health, including mental health support for mothers. Website: www.hmhbga.org
- **Mental Health America of Georgia (MHA of GA):** Promotes mental health awareness and access to mental health services. Website: www.mhageorgia.org
- **NAMI Georgia (National Alliance on Mental Illness):** Offers support, education, and advocacy for individuals affected by mental illness. Website: www.namiga.org
- **Resilient Georgia:** A collaborative group to improve children's and families' mental health and well-being through community engagement and resource development. Website: www.resilientga.org
- **Silence the Shame:** Provides education and advocacy for marginalized communities on mental health and wellness. Website: www.silencetheshame.com
- **The Georgia Council on Substance Abuse (GCSA):** Advocates for the prevention and treatment of substance abuse, provides community education, and empowers individuals in recovery throughout Georgia. Website: <https://gc4recovery.org>
- **Voices for Georgia's Children:** Advocates for policies that enhance the lives of children and families, incorporating mental health initiatives. Website: www.georgiavoices.org

Silence the ~~Shame~~

BE THE CHANGE YOU WANT TO SEE IN THE WORLD

Advocating for mental health awareness is essential in creating a more equitable and supportive society. You can make a meaningful impact by understanding the issues, utilizing advocacy skills, and engaging with your community. Remember, your voice matters, and together we can work towards a future where mental health is prioritized for everyone.