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MAY IS MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS MONTH – GET SCREENED!

COLUMBUS – In recognition of May as Mental Health Awareness Month, the Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (OhioMHAS) is proud to join with the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) and Mental Health America to encourage Ohioans to get educated about mental illness and take a quick, easy online screening.

"It's important to address mental illness all year round, but highlighting these issues during May provides a time for people to come together and display the passion and strength of those working to improve the lives of all Ohioans whose lives are affected by mental health conditions," said OhioMHAS Director Tracy Plouck.

A mental illness is a condition that impacts a person's thinking, feeling or mood and may affect his or her ability to relate to others and function on a daily basis. An estimated 44 million American adults, and millions of children, experience mental health conditions each year, including depression, anxiety, bipolar disorder, schizophrenia and post-traumatic stress. In Ohio, more than 400,000 individuals received public community mental health services during FY 2014. Of that total, 154,000 had a diagnosis of either major depression or bi-polar depression and 35,000 were diagnosed with schizophrenia.

Symptoms of mental illness may include any of the following: changes in energy or sleep patterns; noticeable restlessness or irritability; feelings of sadness, emptiness, hopelessness or guilt; loss of interest or pleasure in activities; difficulties concentrating or making decisions; changes in appetite, eating habits or weight; and frequent thoughts of death or suicide. An estimated 75 percent of all mental illnesses develop by age 24, underscoring the importance of early identification.

"Mental health conditions, such as depression or anxiety, are real, common and treatable," said Plouck. "Early engagement and support are crucial to improving outcomes and increasing the promise of recovery."

Ohioans may access a variety of free, online screening tools available at: http://www.mentalhealthamerica.net/mental-health-screening-tools to determine if it's time to seek professional help. If a potential illness is indicated, OhioMHAS oversees a statewide network of care providers that includes more than 400 community-based mental health agencies and six state-operated psychiatric hospitals. A complete list of certified providers can be found at www.mha.ohio.gov or by calling Ohio's toll-free information and referral line: 1-877-275-6364. The line is staffed Monday-Friday from 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

Visit https://www.nami.org/mentalhealthmonth and http://www.mentalhealthamerica.net/may to learn more about Mental Health Awareness Month. The federal Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration has set aside Thursday, May 5 as "National Children's Mental Health Awareness Day" to explore how communities can increase access to behavioral health services and supports for children, youth and young adults. Learn more at: http://www.samhsa.gov/children/national-childrens-awareness-day-events/awareness-day-2016.

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