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What Students Want You To Know About The Our Minds Matter Movement



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On Wednesday, May 1, a crowd of students gathered at St. Martin's-in-the-Field Episcopal Church at 6:00am and marched down Benfield Road to Severna Park High School to advocate awareness of and more resources for student mental health. This was the first movement of Our Minds Matter, an initiative formed by SPHS juniors Katrina Schultz, Parker Cross, Lauren Carlson, Megan Mouldsdale and Sabina Khan. In addition to destigmatizing mental health, the group wants more funding in public schools focused on mental health, more training for teachers and more counselors available to students.

Here is an outline of the Our Minds Matter goals, as outlined by the students. They want:

1. The elimination of the stigma surrounding mental health.

Through continued awareness, seeking help will not be seen as a sign of shame or cowardice but a mark of bravery and courage. When resources are available, those who need assistance will not be afraid or feel guilty to receive help.

2. More mental health funding for trained social workers, psychologists and counselors in schools.

Psychologists and social workers, in some cases, alternate between multiple schools, are spread incredibly thin, and are underpaid. Increasing funding for trained professionals would allow more personnel to be hired and increase the number of students whom counselors are responsible for.

Read more here (<https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/education-k-12/reports/2016/09/22/144636/counsel-or-criminalize/>) and here (<https://nces.ed.gov/blogs/nces/post/explore-data-on-mental-health-services-in-k-12-public-schools-for-mental-health-awareness-month>).

3. A heavier influence of mental health education in health classes, allowing teachers to address how to properly deal with mental health and mental illnesses.

Incorporating mental health and illness education into schools would help students develop healthy coping mechanisms and effective management for bad stress.

4. Easier, cheaper, and readily available medical insurance for mental health for teenagers, or those who would typically have less access to it.

The lack of availability of treatment, and the cost of it when it is available, causes an immense quantity of people to go untreated.

Read more here (<http://www.mentalhealthamerica.net/issues/mental-health-america-access-care-data>).

5. The abolishment of discrimination among mental health, as access to treatment for minority groups is less available even though they are at higher risk of suicide.

Different minority groups face discrimination and are less likely to receive mental health aid or are even able to receive care.

Read more here (<https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/race/news/2018/10/10/459200/4-ways-improve-access-mental-health-services-asian-american-communities/>) and here (<https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/lgbt/reports/2010/12/09/8787/how-to-improve-mental-health-care-for-lgbt-youth/>).

6. The decrease of the mental health workforce shortage, not only in schools but also in private practice.

Improving the mental health care provider to patient ratio can be achieved by providing more affordable education for undergraduate or graduate students pursuing an education in mental health services.

Read more here (<http://www.mentalhealthamerica.net/issues/state-mental-health-america>).

Our Minds Matter will hold a rally in Annapolis on Saturday, May 18, beginning at 11:00am at Susan Campbell Park. The rally will be followed by two workshops at noon: one for students and young adults, the other for parents and adults. Locations for the workshops are to be determined.

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