



**Ministry of Health
& Wellness**

Cayman Islands Government

**World Mental Health Day Message
from
Minister for Health & Wellness Hon. Sabrina Turner
Sunday, 10 October 2021**

“There is no health without mental health.”

This quote by former United States Surgeon General Dr. David Satcher illustrates for me on this World Mental Health Day the fundamental importance of mental health for each and every one of us.

World Mental Health Day is celebrated on 10 October every year under the auspices of the World Federation for Mental Health and endorsed by the World Health Organisation (WHO).

The observance represents a global commitment to raise awareness of mental health issues and to mobilise efforts in support of mental health around the world.

Here in the Cayman Islands, it is an opportunity to recognise and reflect on the mental health challenges we have all been under throughout the past year and a half while dealing with the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on our Islands and the world around us.

COVID-19 has had a major impact on people’s mental health globally, and certainly within our region, increasing new cases of mental health conditions and worsening pre-existing ones.

Some groups, including health and other frontline workers, students, people living alone, and those with pre-existing mental health conditions, have been particularly affected.

As we have seen locally, the pandemic also disrupted the provision of services for mental, neurological and substance use disorders. The mental health impacts of COVID-19 on all of us cannot be discounted and will be seen for a while to come.

Many Caymanians and residents remain under great strain, dealing with increased anxiety around the challenges this pandemic has thrown at us, including financial pressures and fears about our personal safety and that of our loved ones.

The theme for this year's World Mental Health Day is "Mental health care for all: let's make it a reality."

And I certainly aim to make it a reality in the Cayman Islands.

Mental health and overall wellness are very important to me in my role as Minister of Health and Wellness. I hope to strengthen the existing mental health services available locally for vulnerable groups such as our children, youth, and elderly, but also for everyone.

I think it is impossible for anyone to say that they have not experienced mental health challenges at some point in their lives, and certainly not over the past year and several months.

We are taking steps in the right direction, with the increased provision of mental health counseling and educational psychologist support in schools, and our commitment to construct the Cayman Islands' long-awaited residential mental health facility.

I believe there is also a far greater awareness of the impact of mental health on all of our lives, largely through the services provided by the hardworking mental health professionals throughout both our public and private healthcare systems.

But I know that more must be done.

Which is why, included in this Government's Strategic Policy Statement are specific objectives aimed at providing more holistic and available mental health services for the people of the Cayman Islands.

Such as providing a specialised youth mental health facility; promoting better mental health and special needs insurance coverage so everyone has access to mental

health care; and promoting programmes that offer greater work/life balance and which support family systems.

Building a focus on better mental health into our healthcare system and reinforcing every individual's commitment their own personal mental health and that of their families is so important.

I hope that the increased awareness World Mental Health Day provides us with can serve as an opportunity to empower each of us to look after our own mental health and provide support to others.

It is needed.

In our region of the Americas, mental health disorders account for more than one third of total disability, with depressive disorders being the largest single cause of disability. And so sadly, nearly 100,000 people die by suicide each year in our region.

We as Caymanians know the intense sadness we all experience when we lose one of our own to depression and suicide, as small and interlinked as our community is. It is a pain which reverberates throughout our Islands.

One thing I am so glad of, is that the stigma against mental illness seems to be diminishing in our community. There is a greater understanding that anyone, anywhere can be affected – just as close to one billion people around the world are.

I would like to pledge today, that during my tenure as Minister for Health and Wellness, I will do my utmost to ensure that the people in our Islands living with mental health conditions have access to quality community-based mental health services and that their rights and best interests are protected.

Now more than ever, as the COVID-19 pandemic highlights and deepens long-standing mental health challenges in our Islands, it is essential that we work to make mental health care a reality for all.

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