

## EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

# BLACK, INDIGENOUS AND PEOPLE OF COLOR (BIPOC) MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS MONTH

People from all walks of life, gender, age, race, and income levels can experience the challenges of mental illness, but access to quality mental health treatment can be hampered by one's background and identity. BIPOC Mental Health Awareness Month is a national campaign to call attention to the experiences and concerns of people who are marginalized and underserved. Poverty, racism, stigma, judgment, lack of insurance, and lack of culturally competent clinicians can present barriers to mental health treatment for people in BIPOC communities.

The lack of treatment for those who need it can have devastating consequences. For example, untreated major depressive disorder can result in emotional, behavioral and health problems that seriously impact quality of life. Substance abuse, suicidal feelings and suicide attempts, self-destructive behavior, and medical problems such as heart disease are possible complications.

Moreover, social circumstances such as economic distress, discrimination, and racism can contribute to the likelihood of developing a mental illness. Even before the pandemic, studies showed that Blacks and Latinos were more likely to have higher levels of chronic stress and experience serious depression than whites.

The National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) and other organizations have state chapters that offer mental health resources including treatment directories to find culturally competent therapists, online discussion and support groups, podcasts, information on mental health conditions, and other resources to support the mental health and well-being of people of color.

