

# THE PULSE

MENTAL HEALTH AND WELL-BEING FOR CENTRAL OKLAHOMA SENIORS

Checking our pulse is essential in monitoring our Vital Signs. The Pulse highlights a specific indicator of human well-being that is contained in United Way of Central Oklahoma's Vital Signs report or is being noticed through United Way's work in the community.

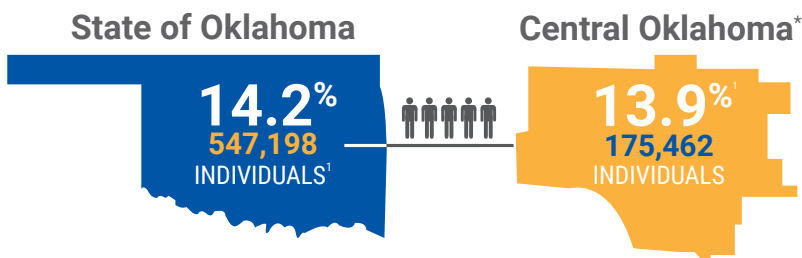
**Oklahoma continues to rank among the worst states for mental health**, having the second highest prevalence of adults with mental illness and the seventh worst mental health system based on prevalence and access to care in the nation. We now focus our attention on how mental illness affects our rapidly aging Oklahoma population and current best practice solutions that are available in central Oklahoma to meet this growing priority need.

## DEFINITIONS

**Mental Health:** a state of well-being in which every individual realizes his or her own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to his/her community. – World Health Organization

**Mental Illness:** any disease or condition that influences the way a person thinks, feels, behaves, and/or relates to others and to his/her surroundings. – Medicinenet.com

## Average percent of population 65 years and over:



Nationally, this population is projected to increase to over 20% of the total population by 2030.<sup>2</sup>





Mental health and emotional well-being are important at all stages of life. Important aspects of mental health in aging adults includes **stable intellectual functioning, capacity for change, and productive engagement with life.**<sup>3</sup>

**19.8%**  
of individuals older than 65 have some type of mental disorder.<sup>4</sup>



Risk factors for anxiety and depression among seniors include **disability** and **loss associated with aging** (loss of social status and self-esteem, loss of independence and physical capacity, and death of friends and family).<sup>4,5</sup>



**Rates of depression in seniors by living setting:**

Independent living <sup>6</sup>	<b>3 - 4.5%</b>
Assisted living <sup>7</sup>	<b>6 - 9%</b>
Nursing homes <sup>8</sup>	<b>11.5%</b>
Hospice <sup>8</sup>	<b>13.5%</b>

**Oklahoma ranks**

**9th**

for the highest rate of **suicides among seniors.**<sup>9</sup>

This is **higher** than the suicide rate among Oklahoma's youth ages 15 to 24. (11th at 16.8%)<sup>9</sup>



**1**

senior suicide occurs every **80 MINUTES** in the United States.<sup>10</sup>

The leading cause of suicide among the elderly is undiagnosed and/or **untreated depression.**<sup>10</sup>

Seniors have a **much higher** suicide completion rate.



For all ages combined, **1 suicide** occurs for **every 100-200 attempts.**<sup>10</sup>



Over the age of 65, **1 suicide** occurs for **every 4 attempts.**<sup>10</sup>

**Male widowers** are **five times more likely** to die by suicide than men who are married.<sup>6</sup>

**Baby Boomers** (born between 1946 - 1964) are the next emerging cohort of senior Oklahomans. **Currently, this age demographic accounts for more than 1/3 of all U.S. suicides.** Throughout their lifespan, this group has been identified as an at-risk population for mental health disorders, substance abuse and suicidality. **Impressively, however, they are also the first generation to openly seek and utilize mental health services.**<sup>11</sup>



**Warning signs** for potential suicide:

Direct or indirect **statements about frustrations with life** or feeling burdensome

Sudden decision to **give away prized possessions**

General **apathetic interest in life**

**Reclusiveness/isolation**<sup>6</sup>

# 63% ADULTS OVER 65 YEARS

have unmet need for mental health services<sup>3</sup>



## Barriers to mental health services for Oklahoma seniors:

<b>Patient barriers</b>	Prefer primary care physicians, tendency to emphasize somatic problems, reluctance to disclose psychological symptoms. <sup>3</sup>
<b>Provider barriers</b>	Only 55% of internists feel confident in diagnosing depression and only 35% feel confident in prescribing antidepressants to older persons. <sup>3</sup>
<b>Mental health delivery system barriers</b>	Time pressures and reimbursement policies. <sup>3</sup>
<b>Caregiver barriers</b>	Stereotypes about normal aging. For example, the belief that senility and prolonged bereavement are normal parts of aging may delay seeking services for senior relatives with mental illness. <sup>3</sup>

**Successful aging** is contingent upon avoiding disease and disability, sustaining high cognitive and physical functioning and engaging with life.<sup>12</sup> Physical activity indirectly improves satisfaction with life in seniors by influencing affect, mental health and self-efficacy.<sup>13,14</sup> In fact, seniors engaging in moderate to high physical activity **75 to 150 minutes a week are less likely to develop cognitive impairment, depression and dementia.**<sup>15</sup>

## Physical activity in seniors include:

- **Leisure time activities**  
(walking, dancing, gardening, swimming)
- **Transportation activities**  
(walking or cycling)
- **Occupational activity**  
(if still working)
- **Community involvement through volunteerism**



## SOLUTIONS IN PRACTICE

### MAPS 3 Senior Health and Wellness Centers

In 2009, the citizens of Oklahoma City voted to invest in their community through the Maps 3 projects, a one-cent, limited-term sales tax to pay for debt-free projects that improve quality of life. One such project is the investment in four Senior Health and Wellness Centers which will connect Oklahoma City's seniors with important services such as a clinic offering primary and psychiatric health care, pharmacy, and laboratory services specializing in senior health and wellness. Members will also have the opportunity to interact with each other and participate in senior level activities including yoga, water aerobics, walking clubs, cooking classes, book and card clubs, and computer and art classes.

**For more information, go to [healthylivingokc.org](http://healthylivingokc.org) or call (405) 773-6910.**

### RSVP of Central Oklahoma

Senior Oklahomans can engage in community volunteerism through RSVP, a United Way Partner Agency that links senior volunteers with 125 local nonprofit organizations that depend on volunteer support to meet their agency missions and the needs of their clients. **Check out [rsvpokc.org](http://rsvpokc.org) or call (405) 605-3110 for more information.**



**The Pulse is a product of Vital Signs; Oklahoma's only broad-based community evaluation with over two decades of trend data in six key areas important to our quality of life.**

**Interested in printed copies of our research publications or a presentation?**

Contact United Way of Central Oklahoma's Community Impact Department at [info@unitedwayokc.org](mailto:info@unitedwayokc.org) or 236-8441.

**NOTES AND CITATIONS**

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- \* Central Oklahoma includes Canadian, Cleveland, Lincoln, Logan, Kingfisher, Oklahoma and Pottawatomie counties.

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