



TO: INTERESTED PARTIES
FROM: ELIZABETH HARRINGTON, PARTNER – PUBLIC OPINION STRATEGIES
RE: KENNEDY FORUM ILLINOIS STATEWIDE TELEPHONE SURVEY – KEY FINDINGS
DATE: APRIL 13, 2015

KEY FINDINGS:

Nine out of ten Illinois adults (91%) believe that mental health conditions are a serious public health problem in the state today. A majority of Illinois adults (53%) believe mental health conditions are a “very serious” public health problem in the state.

- Respondents were asked: “How serious of a public health problem do you think mental health conditions, such as depression, anxiety, bipolar disorder, schizophrenia, alcohol or drug addiction are in Illinois today...very serious, somewhat serious, not too serious, or not at all serious?”

53%	Very Serious
38%	Somewhat Serious
5%	Not Too Serious
2%	Not At All Serious
2%	Don’t Know (volunteered response)
- Republicans (88%), Independents (86%), and Democrats (94%) think mental health conditions are a serious public health problem in Illinois.
- Both women (94%) and men (88%) believe mental health conditions are a serious public health problem in Illinois.

A majority of Illinois adults (62%) believe that physical health is treated with greater importance than mental health in the current health care system in Illinois.

- Respondents were asked: “Do you think that mental health and physical health are treated with equal importance in our current health care system in Illinois?” Respondents who said “no” were asked to specify which they felt was treated with more importance.

26%	Yes, Mental and physical health are treated with equal importance
62%	No, Physical health is treated with more importance
3%	No, Mental health is treated with more importance
9%	Don’t Know/Refused (volunteered responses)

The majority of Illinois adults support (62%) making “radical” or “significant” changes to the way we are handling mental health conditions in Illinois today.

- Respondents were asked: “Overall, do you think the current way we are handling mental health conditions, such as depression, anxiety, bipolar disorder, schizophrenia, alcohol or drug addiction in Illinois needs...a radical change, a significant change, some change, only minor change, or no change?”

23%	Radical Change
39%	Significant Change
26%	Some Change
5%	Only Minor Change
3%	No Change
4%	Don’t Know/Refused (volunteered response)

As the data above shows, there is overwhelming support for making changes to the way we are handling mental health conditions in Illinois today (88% of Illinois adults support making “radical” or “significant” or “some” change). Republicans (82%), Independents (84%), and Democrats (92%) are in agreement about the need for changes in the way we are handling mental health conditions in Illinois today. Majorities of Independents (61%) and Democrats (70%) and roughly half of Republicans (49%) support making “radical” or “significant” changes.

- We asked respondents who support changing the way we are handling mental health conditions the following open-ended question: “Please tell me some of the reasons why you said the current way we are handling mental health conditions in Illinois needs (radical, significant, or some change). What specifically do you think needs to change?”
 - The main reason respondents say they support changes to the way we are handling mental health conditions is that they believe there are not enough adequate treatment options available today in Illinois. They suggest increasing funding for mental health and increasing the number of facilities able to handle mental health patients so treatment is made available to everyone who needs it in Illinois. In addition, they also suggest expanding education of health care professionals about mental health which may lead to more accurate or earlier diagnoses of mental health conditions so people can receive the appropriate treatment.
 - Respondents say that mental health facilities in Illinois have been closing down and see this as a problem that needs to be addressed and fixed.
 - Respondents also say an issue is that people with mental illnesses often end up in jail or homeless because they do not have adequate access to mental health care services in Illinois.
 - There is a concern among these respondents that mental health is stigmatized in our society today so people who need help do not seek out the treatment they need. They feel there is a need to combat the stigma and educate the public on the seriousness of mental health conditions.

Three out of ten Illinois adults (31%) report being affected by mental health conditions, either themselves or someone in their household.

- Respondents were asked: “have you or has anyone else in your household ever been diagnosed, received counseling, taken prescription medicine, or been hospitalized for treatment of a mental health condition?”

6%	Yes, Self
16%	Yes, Household Member
9%	Yes, Self and Household Member
67%	No
2%	Don’t Know/Refused (volunteered response)

- We asked the 15% of adults in Illinois who reported having a mental health condition themselves if they think they have ever been treated unfairly at work, when looking for housing or a place to live, or when receiving health care treatment or services because of their mental health condition. Among the 15% of adults in Illinois who reported having a mental health condition themselves, roughly one in three of these respondents believe they have been treated unfairly because of their condition.

Nine out of ten Illinois adults (90%) agree that there is a negative stigma associated with mental health conditions. A majority of Illinois adults (62%) “strongly agree” with this premise.

- Respondents were asked whether they agreed or disagreed with the following statement: *“There is a negative stigma associated with mental health conditions, such as depression, anxiety, bipolar disorder, schizophrenia, alcohol or drug addiction.”*

62%	Strongly Agree
28%	Somewhat Agree
4%	Somewhat Disagree
4%	Strongly Disagree
2%	Don’t Know (volunteered response)

- Those sub-groups most likely to “strongly agree” with this statement are: Women (specifically working women and younger women), college graduates, and those adults who have been affected by mental health conditions.

Survey respondents were presented with six possible goals for mental health in Illinois. All six of the goals we tested are viewed by a majority of Illinois adults as being important. Ensuring access to care, community support services and resources, and improving quality of care for people with mental health conditions were viewed as most important.

- Respondents were read six possible goals for mental health in Illinois. They were asked to indicate how high of a priority they felt each goal should be using a zero to ten scale, where “ten” means it should be the single most important goal, a “zero” means it should not be an important goal, and “five” is in the middle. Respondents could use any number between zero and ten depending on how they felt. The table below shows the average mean rating and the percentage of respondents rating an 8-10 for each mental health goal.

Mental Health Goals Tested	% Rating 8-10	Average Rating
Making sure people with mental health conditions have access to the care they need regardless of where they live, their ethnicity, income or background	78%	8.7
Making sure people with mental health conditions have access to community support services and resources	73%	8.4
Improving the quality of care for people with mental health conditions	70%	8.2
Conducting research to find new ways to treat mental health conditions	64%	7.9
Increasing state funding for mental health support services and resources	58%	7.6
Decreasing the negative stigma associated with mental health conditions	56%	7.5

There is confusion over whether or not current law provides parity of coverage for mental health benefits.

- Respondents were asked: “As far as you know, under current law, are health insurance plans required to provide mental health benefits with the same rules about co-pays, deductibles, and coverage limits as other medical services?”

38% Yes

25% No

37% Don’t Know (volunteered response)

METHODOLOGY:

Public Opinion Strategies conducted an Illinois statewide telephone survey of N=600 adults 18 or older (land lines + cells). The survey was conducted from March 28-30, 2015. The margin of error for this survey is $\pm 4.0\%$.