First-Ever Report Outlines Extent of Mental Health Disorders in St. Louis Region

St. Louis County, MO (May 21, 2019) – The St. Louis County Department of Public Health, in conjunction with the City of St. Louis Department of Health and the System of Care St. Louis Region, has released a first-ever report on mental health trends in the St. Louis region. The report is expected to lay the groundwork for addressing mental health as a public health issue.

“Mental illness is a serious public health concern in our region,” St. Louis County Executive Sam Page, a medical doctor, said Tuesday. “Providing information to the public and to policy makers about the prevalence of the disease, any disparities that may exist, and how to access available services is crucial. Reports such as these can guide us in mobilizing resources and implementing strategies aimed at reducing barriers to access to care in our region.”

St. Louis County and the City of St. Louis have already begun to use the report to inform their public health strategies.

“This report came about as a result of close collaboration with many key partners and highlights the level of importance of this public health issue in our region,” St. Louis Mayor Lyda Krewson said.

Among key findings, the report showed that, from 2012 to 2016, there were 207 mental disorder-related emergency department (ED) visits per 10,000 residents in the St. Louis area. This rate represents a 45 percent increase from 2010 to 2016.

For the same 2012 to 2016 period, the report found an average of 14 ED visits per 10,000 residents annually due to intentional-self harm, with the highest rates among young adults ages 18 to 24. Among those who sought ED treatment for intentional self-harm, the most common co-occurring diagnosis was substance use disorder. During this period, suicide accounted for 12.8 deaths per 10,000 residents annually in the region, with the rate for men four times higher than for women.

Mental health-related ED visits were concentrated in the northern regions of both the County and the City, areas with high concentrations of poverty. However, ED visits due to intentional self-harm were also high in more affluent parts of the region.

“This has been a first-of-its-kind effort,” remarked Angela Brown, co-chair of System of Care St. Louis Region. “Through this process, we learned there was no template on how to put together a report of this nature that focused on mental health. So, we are in essence leading the way on how different stakeholders can come together to use data to help address a major public health issue.”
Henceforth, St. Louis County will include a mental health report among those it releases annually on chronic diseases in the County.

The report and additional information may be found on the Think Health STL Dashboard: http://www.thinkhealthstl.org/indicators/index/dashboard?alias=mentalhealth

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