Working with partners to close the mental health treatment gap for youth
StrongMinds America (SMA) is working with partners to close the mental health treatment gap for adolescents and young adults ages 16-25. Our evidence-based, internationally recognized program will position your organization or educational institution to meet the growing mental health needs of young people.

We partner with high schools, colleges, community-based organizations, social clubs or civic groups, and any other organization or entity devoted to the mental health and emotional wellbeing of youth.

All our services are provided at no cost to our partners or program participants.

Our mission is to promote the mental health and emotional wellbeing of adolescents and young adults through advocacy, education, and intervention.
The National Institute of Mental Health has raised the alarm about a growing youth mental health crisis that is impacting communities of color the most. Mental health providers are increasingly overwhelmed by the need and many under-resourced communities lack access to mental health services.

Depression and anxiety are the most common mental health concerns affecting young people and they share many of the same symptoms. Each is associated with a variety of functional impairments and other symptoms that can negatively impact physical health, personal relationships, and academic achievement.

Depression is the leading cause of disability in the US for individuals ages 15-44. At its worst, depression can lead to suicide, the second leading cause of death in adolescents 15-19 years old.

In 2022, 2.5 million youth experienced a major depressive episode. This represents an increase of 197,000 over the previous year. Almost 32% of adolescents met the criteria for a diagnosable anxiety disorder by the age of 18.

As rates of depression and anxiety rise within the US, mental health providers are increasingly overwhelmed. Over 5,000 geographic areas across the country (rural and urban) are designated “mental health professional shortage areas” by the US Health Resources and Services Administration.

Over 60% of youth with depression do not receive adequate mental health care. Even in states with the greatest access to care, 1 in 3 youth with depression are not receiving treatment.

The numbers are a call to action. They speak to why it is so critical to partner with SMA. Our young people need critical mental health education and care. Few organizations or institutions are positioned to meet the growing need.
The need for new and innovative mental health care solutions has never been greater, and SMA is at the forefront of innovations that remove barriers to care for under-resourced communities.
## BARRIERS TO CARE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stigma and embarrassment</th>
<th>We <strong>break down patterns of isolation and self-stigmatization</strong> that prolong mental health concerns and prevent youth from seeking help.</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fear and mistrust of treatment</td>
<td>We <strong>work with community-based partners</strong> – allied nonprofits, high schools, colleges, and universities – to challenge stigma, fear, and mistrust of mental health care.</td>
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<td>Lack of affordable services</td>
<td>We <strong>offer quality, no-cost mental health services</strong> delivered by trained and skilled mental health professionals.</td>
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<td>Overwhelmed systems of care</td>
<td>We <strong>identify mental health concerns</strong> before they become a crisis.</td>
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<td>Lack of awareness of existing services</td>
<td>We <strong>increase young people's awareness</strong> of community-level and campus-based mental health services.</td>
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<td>Lack of access</td>
<td>We <strong>bring mental health awareness and services</strong> directly to places where young people gather – college campuses, social or athletic clubs, and community events.</td>
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<td>Racial disparities in the system of care &amp; lack of diversity among mental health providers</td>
<td>We <strong>provide culturally competent mental health professionals and work</strong> with youth from all backgrounds, including Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) and LGBTQ communities.</td>
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We are one of the ONLY youth-focused mental health organizations that provides education, advocacy, AND counseling.
StrongMinds America provides psychoeducational programs and activities that break down false perceptions about mental health care – perceptions that can prevent youth from seeking help. These programs and activities can take many forms depending on the unique needs and requests of our partners.

- Faculty or staff trainings
- Panel discussions featuring mental health experts
- Peer-led education, group facilitation and advocacy
- Special school assemblies or other forums
- Educational games
- Formal presentations
- Educational materials
- Mental Health First Aid
- Consistent presence on campuses or at partner facilities

OUR CONTINUUM OF SERVICES

Psychoeducation

Our presentations and training center on addressing the stigma surrounding mental health concerns and learning to identify signs and symptoms of depression or anxiety.
We work with partners to provide no-cost mental health assessments and depression screening utilizing one-on-one interviews and the Patient Health Questionnaire (PHQ-9).

Since anxiety and depression are closely related and often co-occurring, SMA screens for anxiety using the Generalized Anxiety Disorder Assessment (GAD-7).

Screening can help spot the first signs of depression or other mental health concerns before these concerns can become a crisis.

Students with depression, anxiety or other mental health concerns will have the opportunity to discuss the results with a mental health professional and will be offered the opportunity to participate in group counseling sessions or are referred to community-based services for intervention.

**Group Counseling**

StrongMinds America provides a safe space where youth can share their experiences, learn from one another, work through the causes of their depression, and develop tools to mitigate recurrence.
StrongMinds America uses a group counseling model rooted in **Group Interpersonal Psychotherapy (IPT-G)** – a highly effective, evidence-based talk therapy.

IPT-G is a short-term model that emphasizes relationships as the root of – and source of recovery for – depression. The main goal of IPT-G is to improve the quality of a person’s interpersonal relationships and social functioning to help reduce depression.

The group format is ideal for working on interpersonal problems and developing interpersonal skills with others facing similar challenges.

Groups of 8-12 participants (in-person and/or online) are facilitated by culturally competent mental health professionals. Group facilitators help participants identify the root causes and triggers of their mental health concerns and design strategies to overcome them. Since depression and anxiety can be episodic and continue to recur, the skills acquired through therapy have both an immediate and long-term preventative impact.

IPT-G provides strategies to resolve problems within four key areas that may trigger depression:

- **Unresolved conflict**
  - Unresolved repetitious conflict with family members, significant others, friends, or co-workers.

- **Grief and loss**
  - Unresolved grief over the loss of a close friend or family member.

- **Major life changes**
  - Significant changes such as job loss, relocating, the birth of a child, or an illness that may affect how someone feels about themselves and others.

- **Social isolation**
  - Isolation in response to unhealthy or unfulfilling relationships, the forced isolation youth experienced during COVID, and isolation stemming from feelings of inadequacy or guilt.

**IPT has been endorsed by the World Health Organization (WHO) as an effective treatment for depression in under-resourced communities.**
PHASES OF IPT-G

**Initial Phase**
Work focuses on building trust and rapport among group members so all feel comfortable opening up with one another.

**Middle Phase**
Group members are actively engaged in discussion and collective problem solving. Participants learn to fully understand the symptoms and triggers of depression.

**End Phase**
Participants by now have experienced a substantial reduction in their symptoms. Each makes a plan to identify and mitigate triggers in the future, so that they can prevent recurring depressive episodes.

PEER ADVOCACY AND SUPPORT PROGRAM

The Peer Advocacy, Support and Education Program (PASE) recruits and trains young people (high school juniors and seniors or college level students) to deliver education, advocacy, and peer-led group counseling.

Youth work collaboratively to:

- prepare social media campaigns that address topics around mental health;
- plan and conduct youth-led panels and awareness activities in schools across the state;
- advocate for mental health and other programming on local and state levels;
- represent the voice and concerns of their peers;
- host and facilitate online and in-person awareness workshops for their families, communities, and schools;
- develop a peer leadership council of young people trained to identify mental health issues and provide peer-led groups.
StrongMinds America (SMA) is the US-based program branch of StrongMinds, an award-winning international organization that has been recognized in the global media for its innovative approach to mental health care.

Since its beginning in 2013, StrongMinds has helped lift hundreds of thousands of people out of depression. Our treatment model has been recognized by the World Health Organization, Global Innovation Fund, Happier Lives Institute and the organization has been profiled by the BBC, Bloomberg, World Economic Forum, and the Stanford Innovation Review among others. In 2022, StrongMinds Founder, Sean Mayberry, received Honorary Tribute from the Pardes Humanitarian Prize for advancing the understanding of mental health worldwide.

IMPACT

StrongMinds Africa

- More than 260,000 women and youth have participated in the group counseling program
- On average, 80% are depression free six months post-therapy
- 28% increase in women who report feeling socially connected
- 30% increase in mothers who report sending their children to school regularly.
- 16% increase in women who report participating in significant work or economic productivity
- 13% increase in women who report feeding their children more meals.
IMPACT

StrongMinds America

In 2022, StrongMinds began delivering educational workshops and group counseling to young people in communities throughout Northern New Jersey. SMA anticipates the following results:

- **30,000 youth** will receive critical education and mental health care over the next three years;
- **5,000 youth** will participate in group counseling;
- Participants in group counseling will experience an average **10-point reduction in depression symptoms** scores as measured by the PHQ-9;
- **65% of participants in counseling** will be depression-free or experience minimal symptoms at conclusion of group sessions;
- Group sessions will **strengthen and promote** socialization, support emotional development and decision-making;
- Participants will **report increases** in work productivity and decreases in school/work absenteeism, use of alcohol/drugs, and other risky behaviors.

CONTACT US to learn how you can partner with our award-winning team to meet the mental health needs of youth in your community.

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