About Us

**StrongMinds America (SMA)** is the US-based program branch of StrongMinds, a global nonprofit widely recognized for its innovation in mental health care.

SMA works with partners to close the mental health treatment gap for adolescents, young adults, and women in under-resourced communities.

---

"I made good connections with people, learned about communication and relationships and it gave me more confidence."

- Group Participant, Age 17
Our Mission

Our mission is to promote the mental health and emotional wellbeing of women and youth living in under-resourced communities through advocacy, education, and intervention.

Our Services

1. **Education & Outreach** - SMA works with community-based partners to build a culture of awareness and understanding of the importance of mental health & wellbeing.

2. **Screenings & Assessment** - We provide no-cost mental health assessments & depression/anxiety screening utilizing one-on-one interviews, the Patient Health Questionnaire (PHQ-9) & GAD-7.

3. **Single Session Intervention (SSI)** - We use SSIs to reach clients who are resistant to group counseling—many opt to join a group after an SSI.

4. **Group Counseling** - Group Interpersonal Psychotherapy (IPT-G) is an efficacy-based, short-term, focused therapy for depression & anxiety.
Quarter in Review

Picking up from the last quarter of 2023, SMA continues to make progress. Our team launched a **Single Session Intervention (SSI)** pilot at charter schools in Newark. The feedback from students was positive and the our SSI pilot has been expanded to several partners in Northern New Jersey, NYC, and Connecticut. We anticipate swift growth in the numbers of single sessions we provide.

We are extremely excited by the growth of our education and outreach programs this quarter. We offered educational seminars (in English and Spanish) to **322** students, teachers, community health workers, mentors, and women. In late February, we began piloting SSIs and reached **65** young people. Additionally, SMA clinicians facilitated 14 new (6-week) counseling groups with **73** participants. Baseline and endline data collected utilizing the PHQ-9 indicates **47%** of these participants experienced a clinically significant (5pt+) reduction in depression symptoms. Another **29%** experienced some reduction in symptoms.

The number of new counseling groups and participants will likely remain at current levels into Q2 and Q3. This has much to do with the end of the school year and approaching summer. It also highlights the fragile nature of group work. Participation is low and attrition is high, but we continue to persist. How can we successfully challenge a mental health crisis that impacts millions of people if we work with just one person at a time? That has long been the dilemma faced by mental health providers. We are working to solve this dilemma through persistence, compassion, and innovation.
Our Value

This was our strongest quarter yet and the data suggests our efforts are having an impact. 76% of group counseling participants experienced a reduction in depression symptoms.

Participants of SMA educational programs overwhelmingly reported learning more about mental health, particularly depression. Participants reported feeling confident they could support others experiencing mental health concerns.

This quarter, SMA developed impactful new partnerships with the Boys and Girls Club of Hudson County and Jersey City Youth Corps. We completed our first perinatal group for new and expectant mothers of color.

Reaching those most in need of our services is difficult. There are so many barriers to care. The progress we are making is encouraging, and it inspires us to keep searching for new ways to serve communities.

What Next?

Our focus in Q2 is on expanding partnerships with youth-facing organizations in New Jersey and New York, exploring collaborations with partners in Connecticut, increasing the number of psychoeducational workshops we provide, and expanding our gateway to group counseling services: Single Session Intervention.

Results: Group Counseling

- 29% reduction in depression symptoms
- 47% clinically significant reduction
- 24% nominal reduction or no change

I felt comfortable enough to share things I don’t normally share with anyone. Also, I felt that it allowed us to really connect and get to know each other. I learned how important it is to communicate and be vulnerable.

Group Participant, Age 17
Our Innovation

Brief Counseling

SMA is among the very first US-based mental health organizations to widely use brief therapy or counseling. Brief counseling focuses on achieving specific goals within a limited number of sessions. This focused approach is more efficient, cost-effective and accessible. It is ideally suited to address the nationwide shortage of mental health providers and meet the growing need for services.

Brief counseling is preventative. It can be used to effectively address issues in their early stages and can prevent them from escalating into more serious mental health concerns. By providing timely support and guidance, brief counseling can help clients address issues before they become more difficult to manage. Brief counseling is particularly well suited for addressing certain issues or concerns like mild to moderate depression, anxiety, relationship conflicts, and behavioral problems.

What is SSI?

SSI is an effective, evidence-based model of brief counseling. It is a specific, structured therapeutic consultation with a client that intentionally involves just one visit or encounter with a clinician.

Our SSI is based on the principles of Solution-Focused Brief Therapy (SFBT), with adaptations to fit one session and to maximize utility for people facing a variety of challenges. SSIs have been found to be a useful tool in overcoming stigma or distrust of longer-term interventions.

Our Methods

- Single Session Intervention (SSI)
- Group Interpersonal Psychotherapy (IPT-G)

Utilizing the talents and enthusiasm of community health workers, StrongMinds CEO, Sean Mayberry, created a system of care in rural communities in Uganda and Zambia where none existed. The same approach is needed in the U.S. and it has the same potential to help us meet the growing mental health needs of communities across the country.

Sean has been recognized by TIME100HEALTH for over a decade of innovative and impactful work in Africa. SMA works to bring the same kind of innovation to mental health care in America.
Partner with Us

All of our work is accomplished through program partners. SMA currently has 16 program partners in three states. We are pleased to announce the following new program partners:

- **BOYS & GIRLS CLUBS OF HUDSON COUNTY**

- **New Jersey Youth Corps**

Our work would not be possible without the generous grant support made by one of our newest funders, the TD Charitable Foundation:

---

"I learned that others go through things just like I do, and I feel I gained more calmer ways to handle my feelings and knowing how to respect others. Group Participant, Age 18"