

EACH MIND MATTERS

California's Mental Health Movement

The 7th International “Together Against Stigma” Conference Backgrounder

For more than 14 years the [International “Together Against Stigma” Conference](#) has helped to foster global interest in anti-stigma programs—demonstrating that mental health challenges are not exclusive to any one country or culture. Since the inception of the conference in 2001, six countries have been host to this event, including England, Germany, Japan, Turkey and Canada, which has twice hosted, and now the United States. The International Conference will be a forum for people with lived experience, researchers, practitioners, advocates, members of the media and policymakers to discuss effective interventions to combat stigma and discrimination on an individual, community and societal level.

The conference underscores the fact that stigma and discrimination related to mental health are global challenges. Stigma is pervasive worldwide, encountered at all levels of society, institutions, among families and within the healthcare profession itself. According to the World Health Organization, there is a long history of stigma around mental illness in both low- and high-income countries, including stereotyping, fear, embarrassment, anger, and rejection or avoidance, which can lead to discrimination and the denial of even the most basic human rights.

This year’s conference will be held at the Hyatt Regency in San Francisco, February 18-20, 2015, marking the first time the event will take place in the United States. Hosted collaboratively by the [California Mental Health Services Authority](#), World Psychiatric Association, California Institute for Behavioral Health Solutions and the County Behavioral Health Directors Association, the conference serves as a platform for those working to advance mental health around the globe. Organizers have identified these overarching goals for the conference:

- Raise awareness of mental health and the critical importance of working to eradicate stigma;
- Increase understanding of the experience of stigma and its deleterious effects on individuals, communities and societies;
- Foster a network of energized and committed partners around the world and accelerating the global movement to address individual, public and institutional stigma; and
- Reinforce that change is possible and that stigma can and must be solved now.

The three-day agenda is structured around the theme of “[Each Mind Matters](#): Empowering Community Mental Health through Research, Practice, Policy and Advocacy.” The diverse program offers more than 30 different options for educational symposiums, workshops and oral presentations to share research, programs, best practices and personal stories. The conference will address a broad range of topics from reducing social injustices to promoting cross-cultural collaboration to advocating for improved quality of services through research, policy, and practice. In particular the conference will discuss and hear from diverse youth and young adults with the aim of empowering the next generation as partners in eradicating stigma, preventing mental illness and supporting mental health promotion.

###

