

# Say it out loud.

**Promoting good mental health for everyone in Illinois**



Sponsored by the State of Illinois  
Department of Human Services, Division of Mental Health,  
and the Illinois Children's Mental Health Partnership

**News Release**  
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## **Promoting Good Mental Health in a Bad Economy** Illinoisans Encouraged to *Say it out loud*; Offered Tips for Reducing Stress at Work and at Home

**May 4, 2009 – Chicago –** With data suggesting that one in five Illinoisans is experiencing anxiety and fear as a result of the economic recession, a statewide initiative is offering tips on how to reduce stress and promote good mental health in a bad economy. The tips were released today as the state marks its annual observance of Mental Health Awareness Month.

Mental health and business analysts alike are concerned that the stress and anxiety reported by a nationwide survey released by the employment agency Adecco USA could actually worsen the economic crisis by decreasing productivity in the workplace and increasing absenteeism. And as this stress and anxiety carries over from the workplace into our homes, mental health and education experts worry about the impact on our state's children.

In response, a series of tips were released today by the organizers of *Say it out loud*, a state-funded campaign to promote good mental health for every child and adult in Illinois, lower the barriers that prevent people from either seeking or offering help and support, and build a larger and stronger base of community support for an effective network of treatment services and programs. The public education and engagement campaign is jointly sponsored by the State of Illinois Department of Human Services (DHS), Division of Mental Health, and the Illinois Children's Mental Health Partnership, a network of more than 30 organizations across the state.

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**[www.mentalhealthillinois.org](http://www.mentalhealthillinois.org)**

Phone information: The Illinois Mental Health Collaborative for Access and Choice  
toll-free Consumer and Family Care Line: 866.359.7953 or 866.880.4459 TTY

Tips for employers on how to reduce stress in the workplace are based on the experience of successful programs like the Illinois Mental Health Collaborative and the Illinois' Individual Placement Service of the Supported Employment Program (SEP), a joint initiative between the DHS Divisions of Mental Health and Rehabilitative Services. These programs show that making modest accommodations can enable those with mental health conditions to work productively, contributing both to their own continuing recovery and to their employer's bottom line.

DHS Mental Health Director Lorrie Rickman Jones, Ph.D., and DHS Rehabilitative Services Director Rob Kilbury, Rh.D., urge all employers to make similar accommodations to help reduce stress while enhancing opportunities for individual productivity in the workplace, as reflected in the following tips from the list released today:

- Encourage employees to take occasional breaks to get some fresh air or exercise;
- Restructure jobs or modify duties for someone who seems to be carrying too heavy a load;
- Make sure that employers are providing support (and showing patience) to employees taking on new roles or assignments;
- Minimize distractions, such as noise or clutter, that increase stress levels; and,
- Involve employees in helping respond to the economic challenges we're all facing, and be as transparent and open as possible. The stress created by keeping employees in the dark can be worse than keeping them informed and giving them the chance to anticipate change and choose how to respond.

"As the economy puts stress on all of us, it's more important than ever that we take steps to promote good mental health, and to empower each of us to *Say it out loud* when we need help or when we think someone we care about might need some support," said Jones. "The steps we're recommending that people take—both in their homes and their places of employment—are remarkably easy and make good common sense."

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Another list of tips was released today to help adults cope with stress in their homes or at work, including:

- Exercise or just get outside and enjoy the fresh air;
- Find some reason to laugh (e.g., watch a funny movie or play with your child);
- Be honest about your limitations and don't take on more than you can handle;
- Get involved in something outside of yourself (e.g., volunteer your time); and
- Ask for help when you need it from someone you trust (e.g., your clergy or doctor).

"Reducing stress and anxiety in our lives is really important for us as adults, but it's also important because of the impact stress in our lives has on our children," said Barbara Shaw, Director of the Illinois Violence Prevention Authority and Chair of the campaign's cosponsor, the Illinois Children's Mental Health Partnership. "Children are incredibly good at picking up on the stress levels in their parents and caregivers. So, it's really important not just to reduce stress in our own lives, but to make sure we're not passing stress on to our children."

*Say it out loud* is a four-year public education and engagement campaign to promote good mental health for everyone in Illinois. Since being launched in May 2008, the campaign has included significant outreach through trusted professionals and those who influence our mental health (e.g., doctors, clergy, teachers, etc.), as well as public service messaging, a new website, and mini-grants to community-based outreach and engagement initiatives across the state. A recent study concluded that the campaign is effective in creating changes in understanding and awareness relative to mental health promotion, and in motivating behaviors consistent with the campaign's calls to action, including asking for help when it's needed and offering help and support to others.

The Division of Mental Health is housed in the state's Department of Human Services, which is led by Secretary Carol L. Adams, Ph.D., and provides a wide variety of services at all levels for adults and children throughout the state. These services are offered through hundreds of providers, including mental health clinics, agencies and hospitals.

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The Illinois Children's Mental Health Partnership was created by the Children's Mental Health (CMH) Act of 2003 and charged with developing, implementing and monitoring a statewide plan to promote the mental health and wellbeing of children from birth through eighteen years of age. The partnership is comprised of more than 30 members appointed by the Governor who represent families, child advocates, education, early childhood, health, mental health, child welfare, juvenile justice, substance abuse, violence prevention, and others. Relevant state agencies and state legislators are also included in the partnership.

For more information about the *Say it out loud* campaign, visit [www.mentalhealthillinois.org](http://www.mentalhealthillinois.org). And for access to mental health resources and referrals through the Illinois Mental Health Collaborative for Access and Choice, call 1-866-359-7953 (or 1-866-880-4459 TTY).

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