

# Revolutionizing Rural Mental Wellness: Bridging the Gap Between Policy and Reality



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## Disclosure

The presenter(s) do not have a financial arrangement related to the content of this activity.



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# Disclaimer

The views expressed in this presentation are those of the speaker and do not necessarily represent the views, policies, and positions of the host.



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# Learning Objectives/Outcomes

- Explore the impact of the growing epidemic of anxiety, depression, and substance abuse on rural communities
- Analyze the gaps between policy intentions and implementation in rural behavioral health
- Identify potential solutions and initiate conversations for a structural overhaul of rural behavioral health systems

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# Introductions



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## The Past 4 Years have been Difficult in Rural America

- Pandemic
- Derechos and Drought (extreme weather)
- Avian flu (bird flu)
- Social/Racial injustice
- Inflation
- Supply chain disruptions
- And it goes on and on...

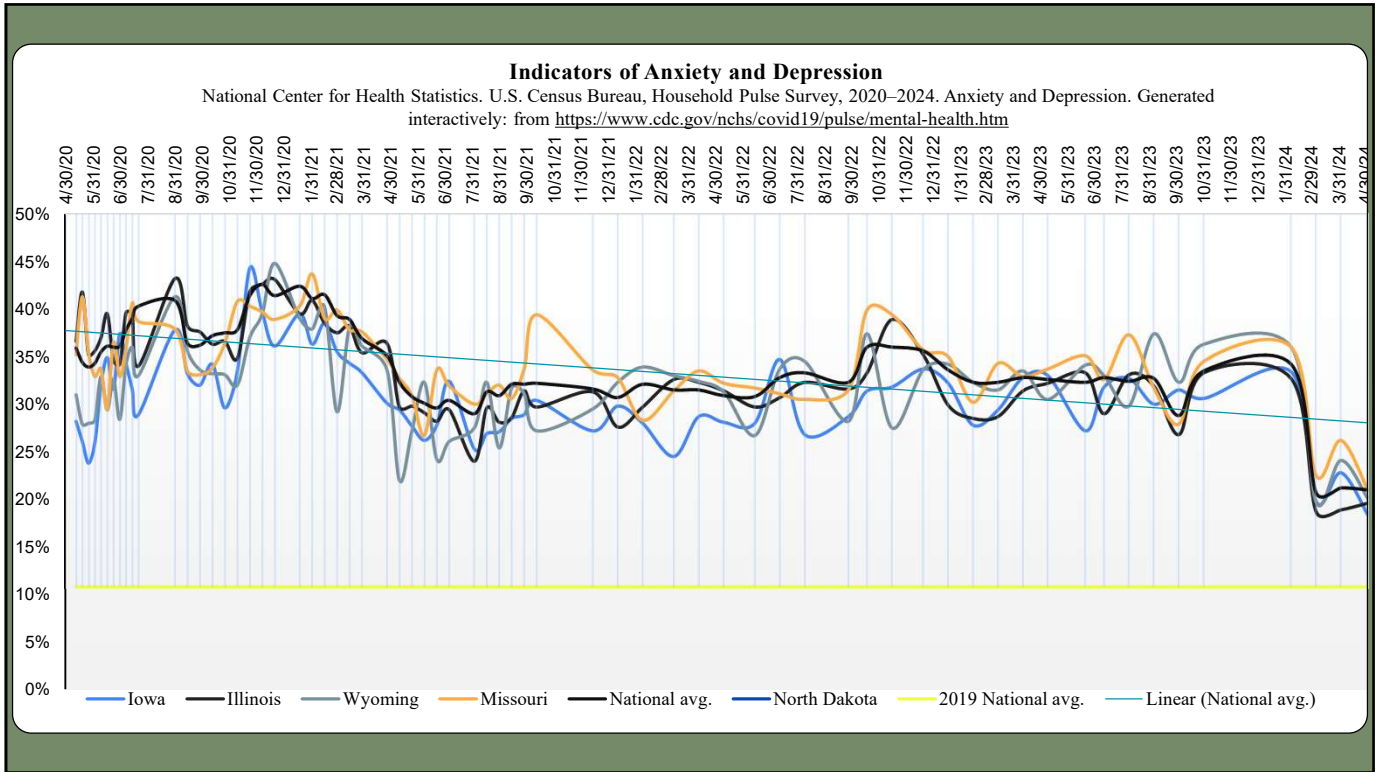
Compounding emotional experiences all at once over a prolonged length of time contribute to collective trauma...

## We All Experience...

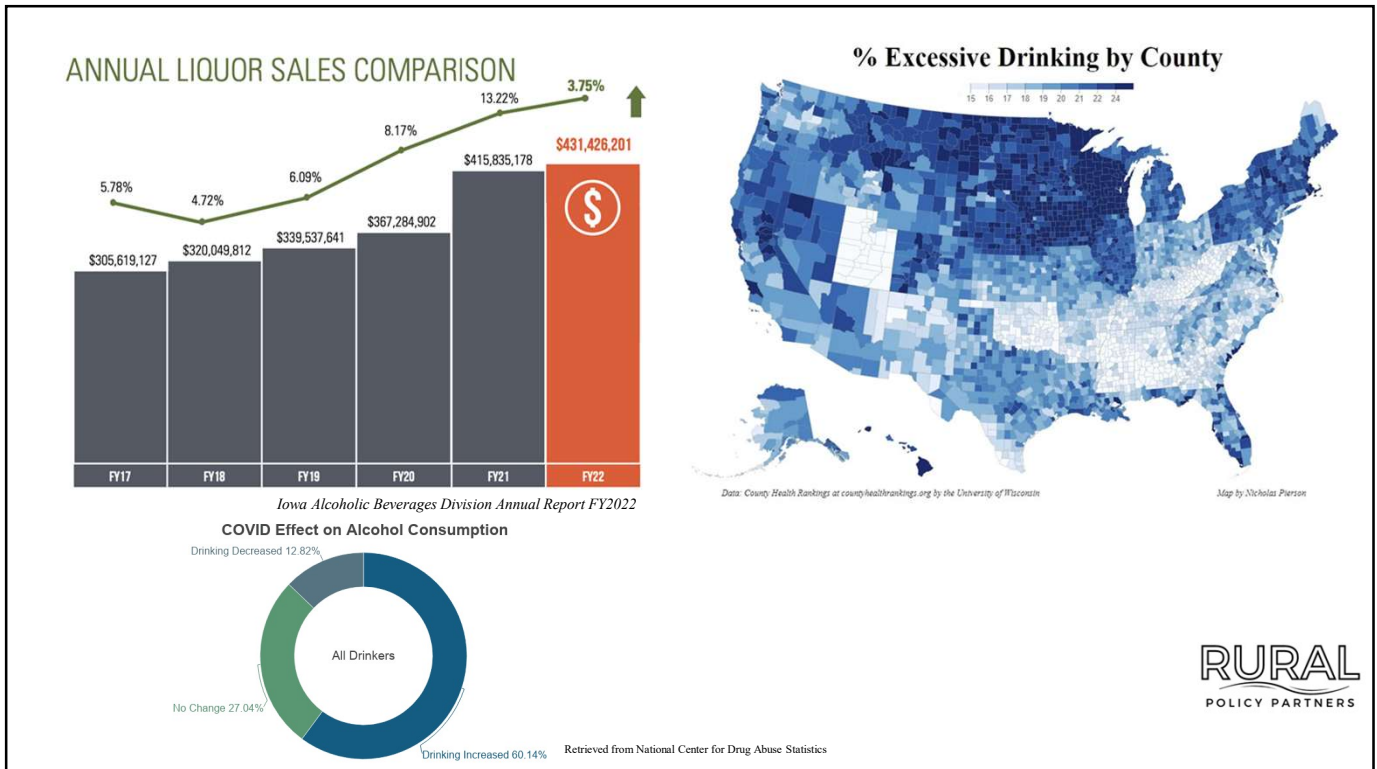
- Exhaustion
- Overload
- Sadness
- Hopelessness
- Languishing
- Demoralization
- Grief

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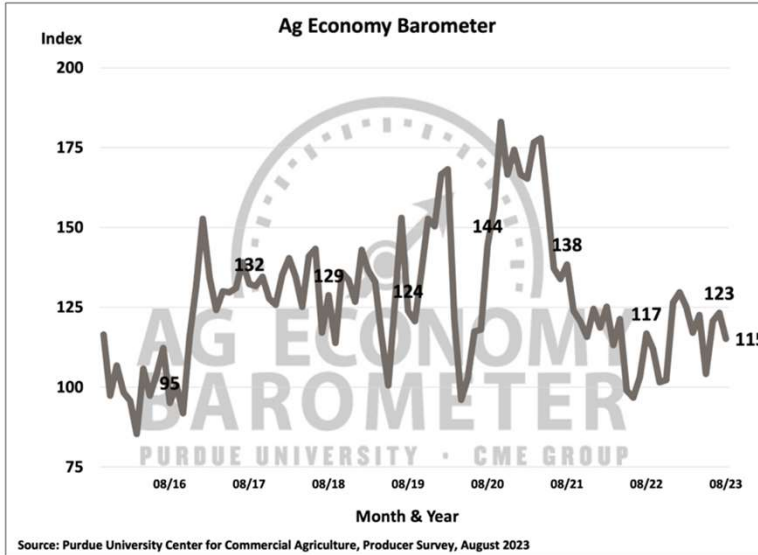


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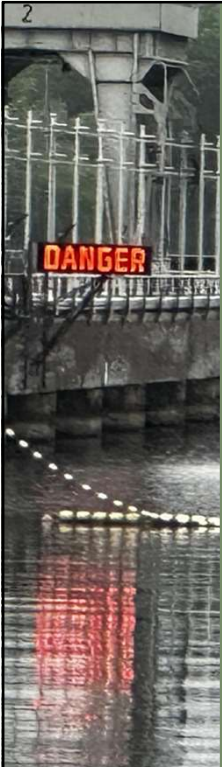
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# Financial Worry....

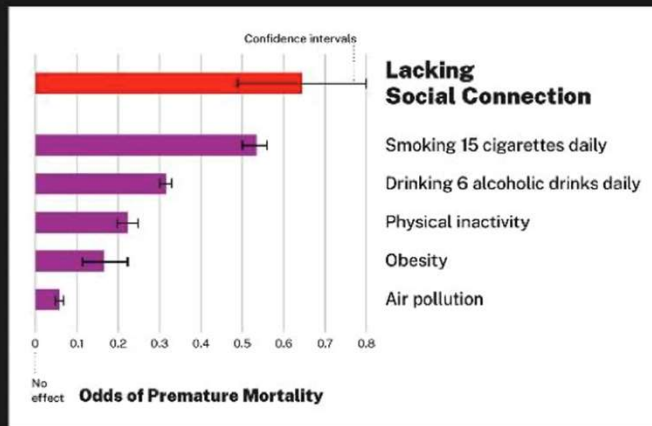


Money and Mental Health Policy Institute:

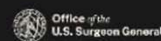
86% of people with mental health issues and debt say that their debt makes their mental health issues worse.



## Lacking social connection is as dangerous as smoking up to 15 cigarettes a day.



Source: Holt, Lunstad J, Robles TF, Sbarra DA. Advancing Social Connection as a Public Health Priority in the United States. *American Psychology*. 2017;72(6):517-530. doi:10.1037/amp000103. This graph is a visual approximation.



## Our Epidemic of Loneliness and Isolation 2023

The U.S. Surgeon General's Advisory on the Healing Effects of Social Connection and Community



## Slide 9

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- 1 change side conversation to hospital impact  
renee schulte, 4/17/2023

**Figure 1: Comparison of the Top 20 Rural Healthy People Priorities Selected Overall vs. by U.S. Census Region**

| Rural Healthy People 2030<br>Top 20 Priorities, Overall |                                    | Ranking by U.S. Census Region |                      |                  |                 |
|---|------------------------------------|-------------------------------|----------------------|------------------|-----------------|
|   |                                    | Midwest<br>(n=326)            | Northeast<br>(n=129) | South<br>(n=339) | West<br>(n=224) |
| 1   | Mental Health and Mental Disorders | 1                             | 1                    | 1                | 1               |
| 2   | Addiction                          | 2                             | 2                    | 2                | 2               |
| 3   | Health Care Access and Quality     | 3 (Tie)                       | 4                    | 4                | 3               |
| 4   | Overweight and Obesity             | 3 (Tie)                       | 5                    | 3                | 6 (Tie)         |
| 5   | Drug and Alcohol Use               | 5                             | 3                    | 5                | 4               |
| 6   | Nutrition and Healthy Eating       | 6 (Tie)                       | 6                    | 6 (Tie)          | 5               |
| 7 (Tie)   | Older Adults                       | 10                            | 8                    | 9                | 6 (Tie)         |
| 7 (Tie)   | Preventive Care                    | 8                             | 10                   | 8                | 8 (Tie)         |
| 9   | Diabetes                           | 11                            | 12 (Tie)             | 6 (Tie)          | 13              |
| 10  | Economic Stability                 | 6 (Tie)                       | 9                    | 10               | 11              |
| 11  | Transportation                     | 9                             | 7                    | 12               | 17              |
| 12  | Cancer                             | 12                            | 12 (Tie)             | 11               | 19              |
| 13  | Public Health Infrastructure       | 14                            | 12 (Tie)             | 15               | 10              |
| 14  | Housing and Homes                  | 15 (Tie)                      | 11                   | 17               | 8 (Tie)         |
| 15  | Workforce                          | 13                            | 16                   | 21               | 11              |
| 16  | Education Access and Quality       | 20 (Tie)                      | 15                   | 13               | 15 (Tie)        |
| 17  | Health Insurance                   | 17                            | 20 (Tie)             | 19               | 15 (Tie)        |
| 18  | Child and Adolescent Development   | 23                            | 17 (Tie)             | 18               | 18              |
| 19  | Hospital and Emergency Services    | 19                            | 17 (Tie)             | 16               | 20              |
| 20  | Chronic Pain                       | 20 (Tie)                      | 34 (Tie)             | 24 (Tie)         | 14              |

**Mental Health & Addiction  
Have surpassed access to  
basic healthcare as primary  
concerns**

Rural Healthy People 2030; Common Challenges, Rural Nuances. Morgan Kassabian, MBA, Aakriti Shrestha, MPH, Timothy Callaghan, PhD, Janet Helduser, MA, Scott Horel, MAG, Natasha Johnson, MBA, Savanna L ispar, MHA, Jane Bolin, PhD, JD, BSN, and Alva O. Ferdinand, DrPH, JD. Southwest Rural Health Research Center Policy Brief May 2023



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Policy • Behavioral Healthcare is  
Healthcare



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## Reality

- Disconnected systems
- Lack of warm handoffs
- Wrong level of care determinations
- Long wait times in emergency departments for complex needs

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## Three Steps to Better Behavioral Health Implementation

- Candid Conversations
- Creative Solutions
- Collaborative Strategies

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## Candid Conversations



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## Candid Conversations can include:

- Stakeholder Meetings
- Education and Training
- Provide Resources
- Build Upon “Get-er-done” Rural Perspective

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## Action Steps...

- Isolate the bottleneck
- Identify partners that should be involved
- Convene and listen
- Make a change
- Craft a message and cascade

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## Creative Solutions



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## Creative Solutions Key Considerations...

- No cookie cutter approach
- At the kitchen table
- Bridge generational gaps
- Identify right problem
- Work with what you have not what you wished you had



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## Action Steps...

- Old way is no longer working
- Brainstorm new ways to look at the issue
- Don't let perfection overtake progress
- Just do it



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## Collaborative Strategies



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## Collaborative Strategies: important ideas...

- Build new connections
- Nurture existing connections

It turns out that people who are more socially connected to family, to friends, to community, are happier, they're physically healthier, and they live longer than people who are less well connected.

~Robert J. Waldinger

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## Action Steps...

- Identify potential needed connections
- Invite everyone that wants to invest time, talent or resources
- Collaborate on potential solution
- Communicate regularly

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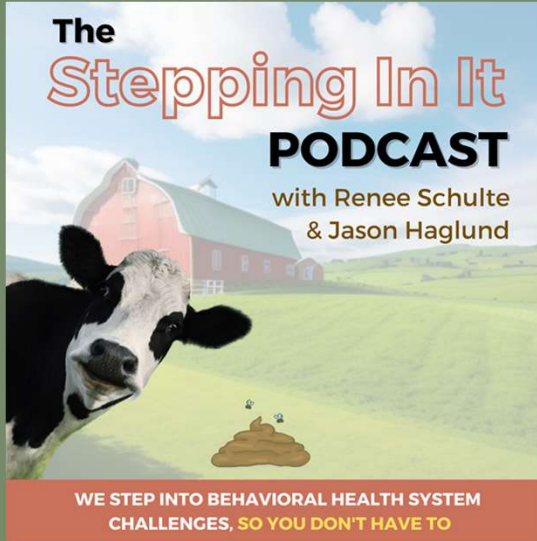
## Action Plan

1. How would you use candid conversations to integrate behavioral health?
2. How would you use creative solutions in your plan?
3. How would you use collaborative strategies to move ahead?

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