

StrongMinds Addresses New Jersey's Youth Mental Health Crisis Thanks to Support from Horizon Blue Cross Blue Shield

Horizon Blue Cross Blue Shield of New Jersey Provides Mental Health Education and Resources to Local Youth Through Global Nonprofit

NEWARK, NEW JERSEY, UNITED STATES, August 12, 2024 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Contact:



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Thanks to Support from Horizon Blue Cross Blue Shield of New Jersey

StrongMinds America (SMA) has presented mental health education workshops and screenings for depression and anxiety to more than 500 young people in under-resourced communities in northern New Jersey in 2024. Thanks to support provided by Horizon Blue Cross Blue Shield of New Jersey (Horizon) through its philanthropic arm, The Horizon Foundation for New Jersey, students attended presentations that centered on addressing the stigma surrounding mental health and learned to identify signs and symptoms of common mental health concerns such as depression and anxiety. Additionally, students were given assistance on how to find and access resources for care within their own communities.

The need for new and innovative approaches to community mental health has never been greater, and SMA is at the forefront of innovations that remove barriers to care in under-resourced communities. Accessing services can prove difficult as 61% of New Jerseyans age 12-17 who had depression did not receive any care in 2022. Black and Latino youth fared even worse, as noted in a 2022 study by New Jersey Policy Perspective, that between 2008-2020 "access to mental health staff increased for New Jersey's white and Asian students, access for Black and Latinx students decreased." In addition to access, youth of color face other determinates of mental health including poverty, lack of insurance coverage, stigma, and a

dearth of culturally competent providers.

“This grant from Horizon had enabled StrongMinds America to challenge stigma and misconceptions about mental health that keep people from reengaging with services they need. Our goal has always been to remove barriers to care in communities we serve, and this funding is crucial in achieving this goal.” said Sean Mayberry, CEO of StrongMinds, the parent organization of the SMA program.

The SMA program works through community-based partners—allied nonprofits, high schools, colleges, and universities—to build a culture of awareness and understanding of the importance of mental health and wellbeing. SMA accomplishes this through a no-cost continuum of care which includes: 1) education, 2) group counseling, 3) clinical trainings for community service workers and volunteers, 4) screenings & assessment and 5) single session interventions.

“Horizon is pleased to support the important work being done by StrongMinds America to support mental health education and outreach to youth in under-resourced communities,” said Jonathan R. Pearson, Executive Director, Corporate Social Responsibility, Horizon. “We are proud to join with grantees such as StrongMinds America who share our commitment to improving the health and communities we serve.”

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About The Horizon Foundation for New Jersey

Horizon Blue Cross Blue Shield of New Jersey’s philanthropic arm, The Horizon Foundation for New Jersey, is focused on making New Jersey healthier by supporting non-profit organizations that expand access to health care, remove barriers to good health and increase opportunities for everyone to achieve their best health, no matter who they are or where they live. Horizon Blue Cross Blue Shield of New Jersey and The Horizon Foundation for New Jersey are independent licensees of the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association. For more information, please visit HZNFoundation.org.

About StrongMinds America

Headquartered in Maplewood, New Jersey, 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. SMA’s work began in 2022 in Newark, New Jersey and has since expanded to encompass partnerships across New Jersey, New York and Connecticut. SMA’s mission is to promote the mental health and emotional wellbeing of women and youth living in under-resourced communities through advocacy, education, intervention.

Since its beginning in 2013, StrongMinds has helped lift nearly 500,000 woman and youth in

Africa out of depression. In 2022, StrongMinds' Founder, Sean Mayberry, received Honorary Tribute from the Pardes Humanitarian Prize for advancing the understanding of mental health worldwide. Sean was recently recognized by TIME100HEALTH for StrongMinds' innovative and impactful work in Africa. For more information, please visit [StongMindsAmerica.org](https://StrongMindsAmerica.org).

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