

State of the Union in Mental Health and Addiction

Fifty-two years ago this week, President John F. Kennedy, gave a special address to the U.S. Congress on mental health in the United States and signed the Community Mental Health Act into law. In 1999 The Surgeon General's report issued under former Surgeon General, Dr. David Satcher, put mental health back on the map. In 2008, then Congressman Patrick Kennedy helped pass the Mental Health Parity & Addiction Equity Act. In 2010, the Affordable Care Act extended insurance to millions of Americans.

Yet, 96% of Americans site mental health conditions, such as depression, anxiety and alcohol abuse as a major health problem. A new poll* suggests that 93% of the public believes that the current methods for addressing mental health need to change.

And, that's exactly why Morehouse School of Medicine (MSM) and The Kennedy Forum have formed a strategic partnership to launch the **Kennedy Center for Mental Health Policy and Research**, headquartered at MSM's Satcher Health Leadership Institute in Atlanta, Georgia.

The partnership was announced jointly by Dr. Valerie Montgomery Rice, president and dean of Morehouse School of Medicine, and Bill Emmet, executive director of The Kennedy Forum on Tuesday, February 3rd during the first *State of the Union in Mental Health and Addiction* (SOTU) at The National Press Club in Washington, D.C. MSM's Dr. David Satcher and former Congressman Patrick Kennedy, both long-time advocates and leading authorities in mental and behavioral health, captivated a standing room only audience during the one hour SOTU which was streamed live to a global audience.

Both Kennedy and Satcher agree that this first State of the Union in Mental Health and Addiction is a first step in the right direction. "Dr. Satcher and I agree that the state of mental health and addictions in America is challenging for our citizens, and we need significant change," said Patrick Kennedy, founder of The Kennedy Forum.

The Center will address a handful of issues critical to the future of mental and behavioral health including: equity and quality, integration and innovation. "Over the next year we will promote progress in these four areas. We will bring accountability to goals through the Kennedy Center for Mental Health Policy and Research. And starting next year at this time, we will be here to tell the story of their progress," said Dr. David Satcher, executive director of the Satcher Health Leadership Institute.

MSM President and Dean Dr. Valerie Montgomery Rice added, "I fully embrace and endorse this historic step toward addressing mental health. I am pleased that the partnership will benefit from our 40 years of leading the fight for health equity. Mental health plays a vital role in overall health and it is an area that deserves attention. We will fully support the efforts of the Kennedy Center and The Satcher Health Leadership Institute toward bringing parity to the overall health of every human being, especially to those who are overlooked and who suffer disproportionately."

*The public opinion research, commissioned by the new Center and conducted by Public Opinion Strategies