

5 Turning Points in Mental Health Awareness

Throughout history, the perception and treatment of mental health conditions have evolved, shaped by significant events that have influenced societal attitudes, medical practices and policies. These five events are milestones in the understanding and treatment of mental health, paving the way for advancements in mental health care.

1773 The Establishment of The Public Hospital of Williamsburg

The institution was the first in the United States exclusively dedicated to the care and treatment of individuals with mental illness. It marked an early effort to provide specialized care for those suffering from mental health conditions.

1843 Dorothea Dix's Advocacy for the Humane Treatment of People with Mental Illness

Dorothea Dix, a social reformer and advocate for mental health, submitted a report to the state legislature in Massachusetts highlighting the inhumane conditions in mental asylums. Her

advocacy efforts spurred reforms in mental health care and led to the establishment of more than 30 mental hospitals in the U.S.

1946 Passage of the National Mental Health Act

This legislation in the U.S. laid the groundwork for federal involvement in mental health. It emphasized the importance of research, diagnosis, treatment and public education related to mental health issues. Three years later, the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) was established.

1990 Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Inclusion of Mental Health

The ADA expanded its definition of disability to include mental health conditions, ensuring that individuals with mental illnesses were protected from discrimination and granted equal rights and opportunities in employment, public accommodations and other areas.

2013 The Affordable Care Act (ACA) Expands Mental Health Coverage

The Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, referred to as the Affordable Care Act or "ACA," is the healthcare reform law enacted in March 2010. In 2013, the ACA expanded mental health and substance use disorder benefits and federal parity protections for more than 60 million Americans. The health plans must cover preventive services like depression screenings for adults and behavioral assessments for children at no additional cost. Insurance companies also can't deny healthcare coverage to anyone because of a pre-existing mental health condition.

