



COUNSELING, MENTAL HEALTH, & SUPPORTIVE SERVICES TO VULNERABLE POPULATIONS

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OVERVIEW

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- Workforce Vulnerable Populations
- Challenges/Opportunities
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CASE STUDY

Maria is a workforce development specialist working for a local employment agency. Her role involves helping job seekers gain the skills, confidence, and resources needed to find and maintain employment. One of her clients, James, a 32-year-old former retail manager, has been struggling with depression for the past year after experiencing job loss due to company downsizing. His symptoms include low energy, feelings of worthlessness, and difficulty concentrating, which have made job searching and sustaining employment difficult.

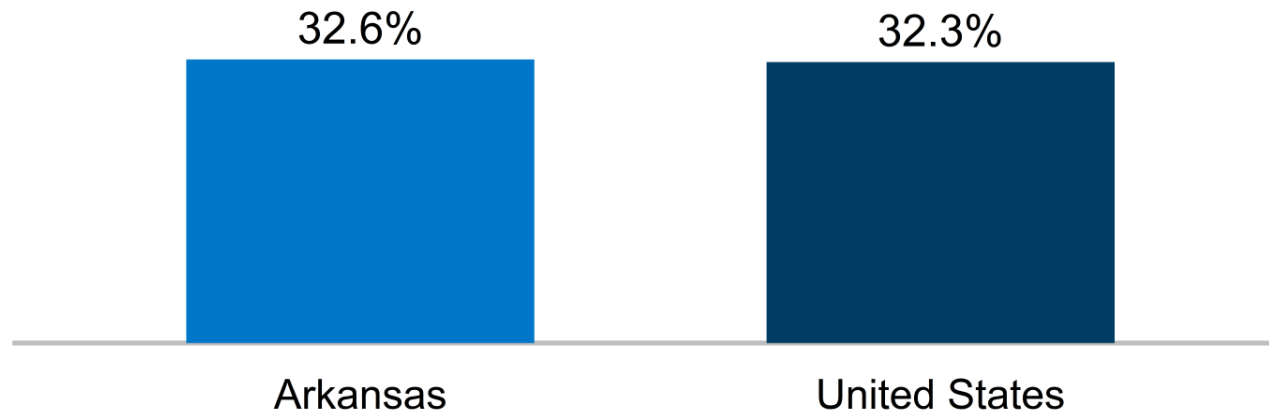
Challenges

Interventions

Questions

MENTAL HEALTH STATISTICS

Share of Adults Reporting Symptoms of Anxiety and/or Depressive Disorder, February 1 to 13, 2023



NOTE: Adults (ages 18+) having symptoms of anxiety or depressive disorder were determined based on having a score of 3 or more on the Patient Health Questionnaire (PHQ-2) and/or Generalized Anxiety Disorder (GAD-2) scale.

SOURCE: KFF analysis of U.S. Census Bureau, Household Pulse Survey, 2023



MENTAL HEALTH STATISTICS

- 1 in 20 U.S. adults experience serious mental illness each year.
In Arkansas, 125,000 adults have a serious mental illness.
- 1 in 5 U.S. adults experience mental illness each year.
457,000 adults in Arkansas have a mental health condition.
- 1 in 6 U.S. youth aged 6–17 experience a mental health disorder each year.
35,000 Arkansans age 12–17 have depression.
- High school students with depression are more than 2x more likely to drop out than their peers.
65.7% of Arkansans age 12–17 who have depression did not receive any care in the last year.

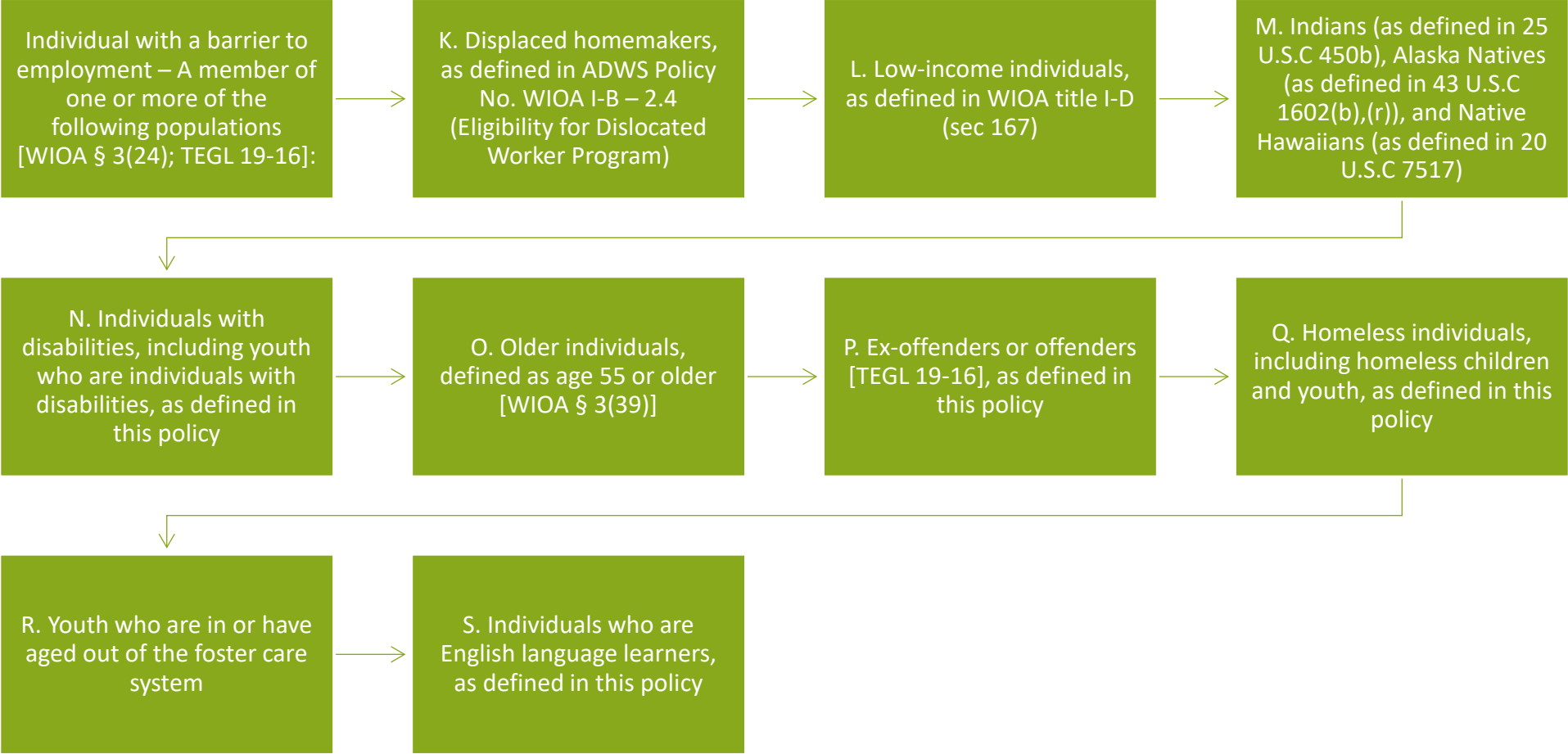
Source: National Alliance on Mental Illness, NAMI Arkansas, Fact Sheet, 2021

MENTAL HEALTH STATISTICS

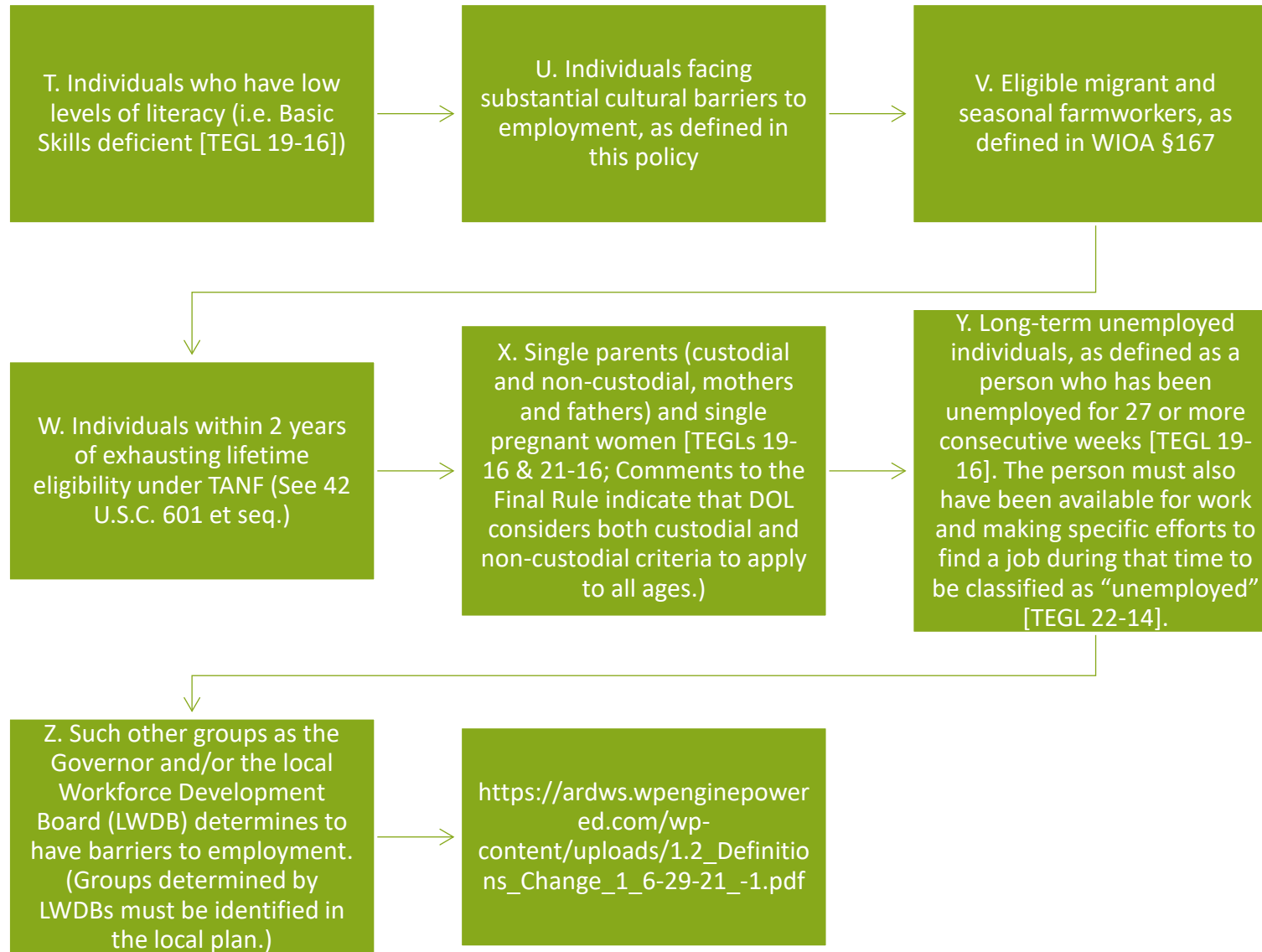
- **2,366 people in Arkansas are homeless and 1 in 8 live with a serious mental illness.**
- **On average, 1 person in the U.S. dies by suicide every 11 minutes.**
- **In Arkansas, 554 lives were lost to suicide and 106,000 adults had thoughts of suicide in the last year.**

Source: National Alliance on Mental Illness, NAMI Arkansas, Fact Sheet, 2021

VULNERABLE POPULATIONS WHO ARE THEY?



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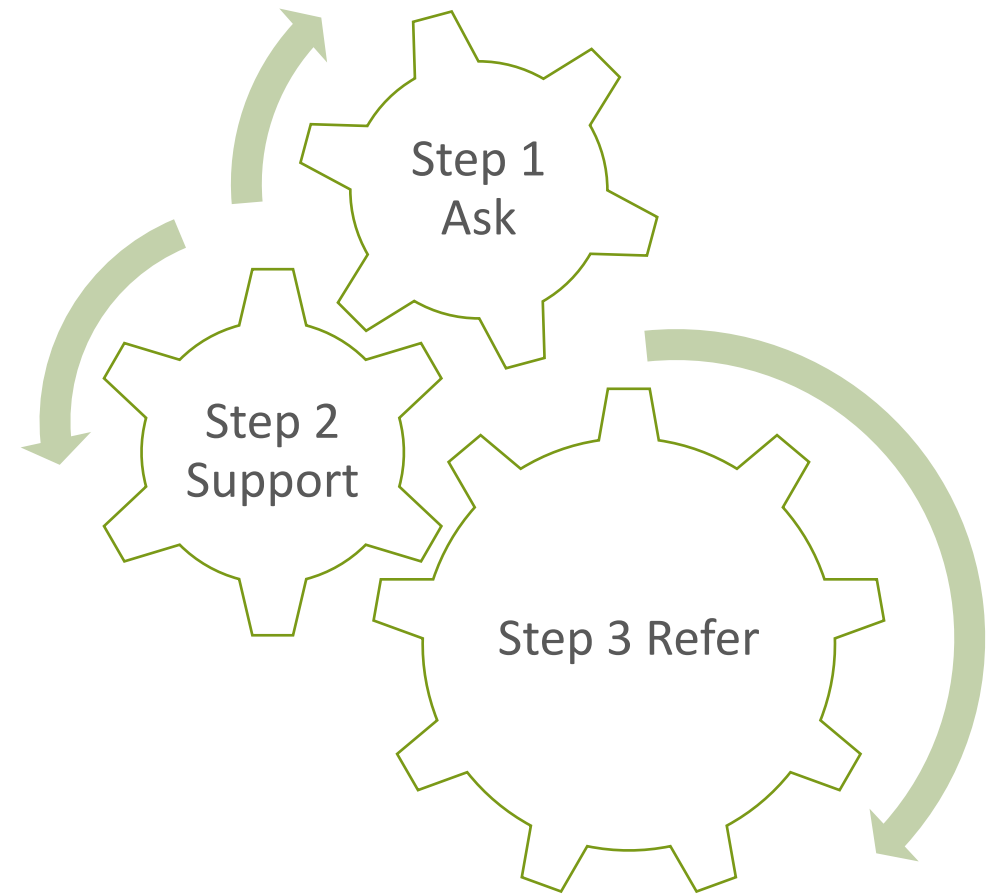
PREVALENCE OF MENTAL HEALTH CHALLENGES IN THE WORKPLACE

Mental health problems can affect a worker's energy level, concentration, dependability, mental ability, and optimism, and hinder performance.

- **Strained Relationships**
- **Poor Decisions & Workplace Errors**
- **Low Morale & High Turnover**

CHALLENGES/OPPORTUNITIES

- **Vulnerable populations, defined as those at greater risk for poor health status and healthcare access, experience significant disparities in life expectancy, access to and use of healthcare services, morbidity, and mortality. Their health needs are complex, intersecting with social and economic conditions they experience. This population is also likely to have one or more physical and/or mental health conditions.**



QUESTIONS TO ASK

1. General Well-Being

- “How have you been feeling overall lately?”
- “How do you feel about your current situation or where you are in your job search?”

2. Emotional State

- “Have you been experiencing any feelings of stress, sadness, or worry that seem to last a long time or feel overwhelming?”
 - “Do you find yourself feeling anxious or on edge more than usual?”

3. Daily Functioning

- “How are you sleeping these days? Are you able to get a restful sleep?”
- “Do you feel like you have enough energy to do the things you need or want to do each day?”
 - “Have you noticed any changes in your appetite or eating habits?”

QUESTIONS TO ASK

4. Concentration and Motivation

- “Are you finding it easy or difficult to stay focused or motivated while working on tasks or job applications?”
 - “Do you feel like you’re able to concentrate as well as you’d like?”

5. Support System

- “Do you have people in your life who you can talk to when you’re feeling down or need support?”
 - “How would you describe your current support network? Do you feel supported by friends or family?”

6. Coping and Stress Management

- “What do you do when you’re feeling stressed or overwhelmed? Do you have any activities or routines that help you relax?”
 - “Have you found it difficult to cope with stress or unexpected challenges lately?”

QUESTIONS TO ASK

7. Feelings of Hopelessness or Helplessness

- “Have you ever felt so overwhelmed or down that you felt hopeless about the future?”
- “Do you find yourself feeling helpless or like things won’t get better, even when you’re trying hard?”

8. Interest and Pleasure in Activities

- “Are there activities you used to enjoy that don’t bring you the same joy or interest anymore?”
 - “Do you still take pleasure in things that usually make you happy

9. Willingness to Seek Help

- “Would you be open to talking to a professional who can help with stress, anxiety, or other emotional challenges?”
- “Have you considered or tried speaking with a counselor or therapist before? If so, how was that experience?”

MAKING REFERRALS

Workforce development employees play a key role in connecting clients to the support they need, including mental health services. Making effective referrals involves clear communication, empathy, and knowledge of available resources. Here's how workforce development employees can facilitate client referrals to mental health services:

- 1. Recognize the Signs and Listen Actively**
- 2. Prepare the Client for the Referral**
- 3. Research and Compile a List of Resources**

SELF-CARE

Workforce development employees working with vulnerable populations often face emotionally demanding situations. Practicing self-care is crucial to maintaining resilience, preventing burnout, and being effective in supporting clients.

1. Set Healthy Boundaries
2. Practice Mindfulness and Relaxation Techniques
3. Prioritize Physical Health
4. Seek Peer Support
5. Schedule Regular Self-Care Activities
6. Maintain Emotional Boundaries
7. Engage in Professional Counseling if Needed

RESOURCES

United States Department of Labor

<https://www.dol.gov/general/mental-health-at-work>

Employer Assistance and Resource Network on Disability Inclusion

<https://askearn.org/page/mental-health-and-marginalized-communities>

Center for Workplace Mental Health

<https://www.workplacementalhealth.org/>

Job Accommodation Network

<https://askjan.org/disabilities/Mental-Health-Conditions.cfm>

Goodwill Industries of Arkansas MHFA

<https://www.goodwillar.org/mhfa>

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