

# Americares Mental Health Initiative

## A Survey of Community Behavioral Health Providers

### Background

In a given year, 43 million people in the United States (U.S.) experience mental illness, and nearly 10 million people have a serious mental illness such as bipolar disorder or schizophrenia.<sup>1</sup> Many of these individuals go without access to mental health services. In terms of need:

- In the U.S., 1.1% of adults live with schizophrenia and 2.6% live with bipolar disorder
- 6.9% of adults in the U.S. had at least one major depressive episode in the last year
- 18.1% of adults in the U.S. experienced an anxiety disorder such as posttraumatic stress disorder, obsessive-compulsive disorder and specific phobias<sup>2</sup>

Nonadherence to psychotropic medications is common, with cost often cited as a contributing factor. In 2012, 60 percent of uninsured Americans with a chronic condition skipped medication due to cost, compared to 14 percent of insured Americans.<sup>3</sup> Additionally, 37 percent of Medicare enrollees are concerned about their drug costs and 20 percent delay filling prescriptions or skip doses to manage costs.<sup>4</sup>

Americares, an international relief and health-focused development organization, is the leading provider of donated medical aid in the United States. Americares is working to expand access to care for low-income Americans, including those living with mental illness, by donating medicine and piloting innovative initiatives. Through the Americares Mental Health Initiative (MHI), generously supported by two individual family foundations, Americares has expanded their network to community mental health centers and other nonprofit mental health provider organizations across the United States. The goal of this initiative is to support behavioral health organizations access to medicines and community health programs. Through the MHI, Americares will reach a network of nonprofit health centers serving the more than eight million Americans with mental health needs.

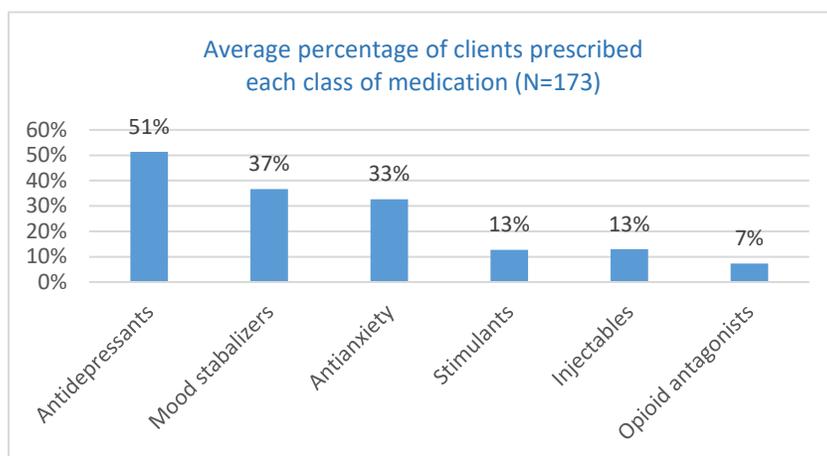
### Methods and Results

The National Council and Americares collaboratively developed a comprehensive survey instrument for organizations that provide behavioral health services, to collect data on client and organizational needs around access to psychotropic medications. A total of 173 individuals responded to the survey.

Respondents represent 45 states across the United States, with a majority coming from nonprofit organizations (128/173, 74%).

Respondents predominately worked in community mental health centers (125/173, 72%), followed by substance use disorder treatment organizations (48/173, 28%). These options were not mutually exclusive, and respondents could select all settings in which they practiced.

Clients eligible to receive medications through the Americares program must be at or below 300% of the federal poverty line, and uninsured or underinsured. Sixty-seven organizations (67/149, 45%) serve a client base where between 76-100



<sup>1</sup> Any Mental Illness (AMI) Among Adults. (n.d). Retrieved December 5, 2016 from <http://www.nimh.nih.gov/>

<sup>2</sup> Serious Mental Illness (SMI) Among Adults. (n.d). Retrieved December 5, 2016 from <http://www.nimh.nih.gov>

<sup>3</sup> 50 Million Americans Ages 19-64 Forgo Medication in 2012 Due to Cost. Retrieved December 5, 2016 from <https://www.pharmacycheckerblog.com/50-million-americans-ages-19-64-forgo-meds-in-2012-due-to-cost>

<sup>4</sup> Ibid

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percent of individuals meet these criteria. Furthermore, 80 percent (90/113) of respondents noted clients have difficulty accessing medications, and 79 percent (100/127) of respondents noted that about 0-25 percent of their client base participate in Patient Assistance Programs to access medications.

Figure 1 displays the average percentage of clients prescribed each class of medication. Antidepressants are the most frequently prescribed class, followed closely by mood stabilizer and antianxiety medications.

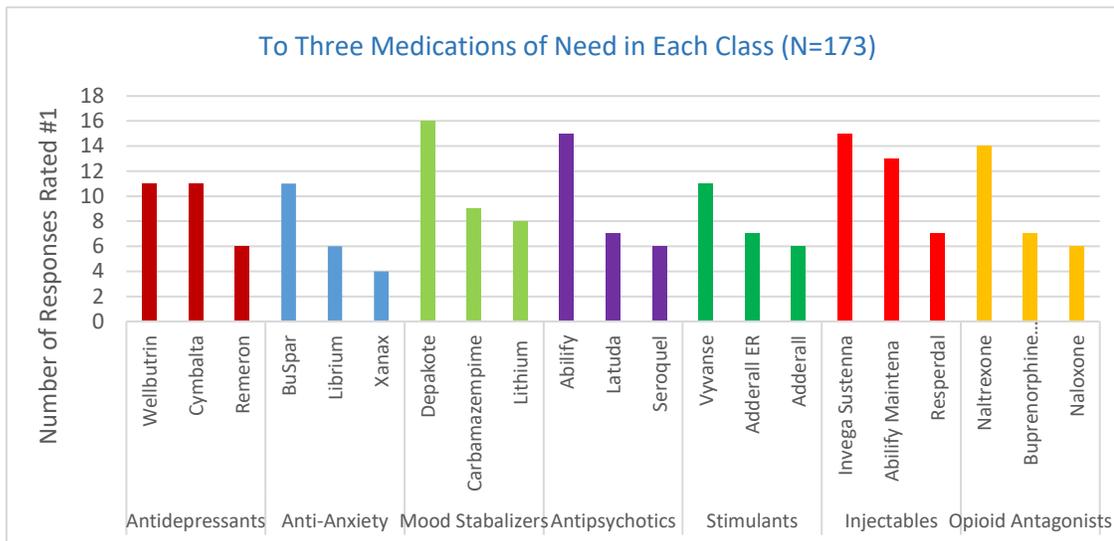


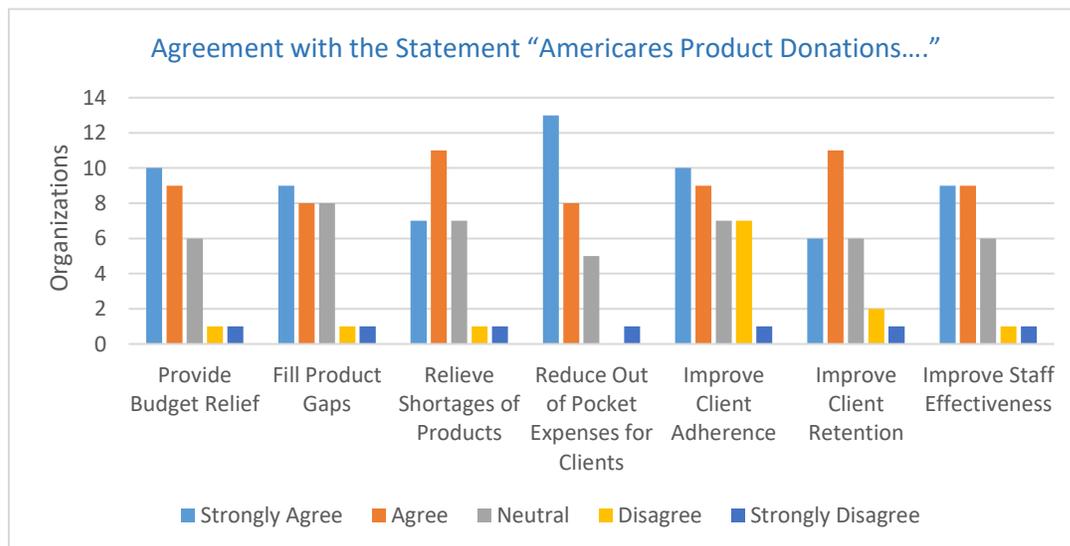
Figure 2 displays the top three medications of need in each class as rated by respondents.

To evaluate current Americares partnerships, sixteen organizations that currently receive assistance and 22 organizations that were unsure of their partnership status, were asked to rate

agreement with several statements (Figure 3). Note – of the two respondents that indicated they disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statements, both were current Americares partners and indicated that expanded access to psychotropic and primary care medications would make the greatest impact on their clients.

### Conclusion

This survey sought to better understand the psychotropic medication needs and technical assistance interests of community behavioral health providers that serve clients living below 300% of the federal poverty line to inform the Americares Mental Health Initiative.



In summary, almost 90 percent of respondents noted they could benefit from partnering with Americares to receive free medications for their client base. A majority of organizations (45%) reported between 76-100% of their client population living at or below 300% of the federal poverty line, making them eligible to receive these gift-in-kind donations. Additionally, respondents noted that a low percentage of clients participated in Patient Assistance Programs, and about 1/3 of those participating had unmet needs with an average of 80% of clients having difficulty access medications. Americares is uniquely poised to fill this gap through the Mental Health Initiative.