



# What Ohioans Think About...

## Mental Health and Substance Use Disorders

Results from *The Health Foundation of Greater Cincinnati's Ohio Health Issues Poll*—May 2005

Mental illnesses and substance use disorders (which include improper use, abuse, or addiction of alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs) affect many people. At some point during his or her lifetime, 1 in 5 people will have or know someone who has a mental illness, and X in X people will have or know someone who has a substance use disorder.

A few decades ago, most people believed that a person with a mental illness was responsible for their condition. Since then, research has shown that mental illnesses are biologically based brain disorders. Today, less than 20% of Ohioans believe that people with mental illnesses are to blame for the condition.

On the other hand, 70% of Ohioans believe that people with substance abuse problems are largely to blame for their own condition. There is emerging evidence that substance use disorders are also biologically based brain disorders and that they are chronic, lifestyle-related health conditions like lung cancer, heart disease, or diabetes. As our understanding of substance use disorders continues to grow, public opinion of what is to blame for these disorders will most likely change, as it did for mental illness.

Mental illnesses and substance use disorders are treatable conditions, and the majority of Ohioans are willing to pay more for health insurance to see insurance companies cover these conditions at the same levels as

% of Ohioans reporting that they **strongly agree** or **agree somewhat** that people with mental health or substance abuse problems are largely to blame for their own condition



% of Ohioans reporting that they feel insurance companies should cover mental health and substance abuse treatment at the same levels as they do physical health treatment even if it means the amount they pay for health insurance goes up



physical health treatment. Currently, most insurance plans have stricter limits on mental health and substance abuse treatment than on physical health. For example, for \$35,000 per year in physical health care expenses, the average family with health insurance pays \$1,500 out-of-pocket. That same family would pay \$12,000 out-of-pocket for \$35,000 in mental

health treatment under the same insurance plan.

Treatment is key to saving money in the long run. For every \$1 spent on mental health and substance use disorder treatment, \$7–X are saved in other healthcare costs, lost productivity, criminal justice system costs, and other societal costs.

*These findings are from The Health Foundation of Greater Cincinnati's Ohio Health Issues Poll, part of the Ohio Poll conducted March 21–April 10, 2005, by the Institute for Policy Research at the University of Cincinnati. A random sample of 846 adults from throughout Ohio was interviewed by telephone. In 95 of 100 cases, the statewide estimates will be accurate to ±3.4%. In addition to sampling error, there are other sources of variation inherent in public opinion studies, such as non-response, question wording, or context effects that can introduce error or bias. For more information about the Ohio Health Issues Poll, please visit [www.healthfoundation.org/ohip](http://www.healthfoundation.org/ohip).*