



## Addressing Mental Health Challenges and Access During COVID-19

Tuesday, May 5, 2020

Anxiety and depression are at record-high levels, with more than one-third of Americans now showing signs of clinical depression. The pandemic has stretched the mental health-care system to the brink, laying bare a multitude of challenges that prevent people from getting the care they need.

This Milken Institute webinar convened experts and advocates to address the rapid increase in demand for mental health services and barriers to affordable care. Panelists also addressed the concrete actions that communities, philanthropists, and organizations can take to partner with individuals and advocates to provide much-needed services across all life stages.

### The discussion featured:

- **Melissa Stevens (Moderator)**, Executive Director of the Milken Institute Center for Strategic Philanthropy
- **Jerome Bettis**, Founder, Jerome Bettis Bus Stops Here Foundation, 2005 NFL Super Bowl Champion; 2015 Pro Football Hall of Fame
- **Dr. Joshua Gordon**, Director, National Institute of Mental Health
- **Nancy Lublin**, CEO, Crisis Text Line

### Key Takeaways:

- [Gordon](#) noted that while scientists have studied the impact of community-level trauma on mental health, this crisis is affecting the health, economic, and social well-being across a broad swath of the population. "Telehealth is making a difference," he says, "But we need a health care system that's effective at treating mental illness."
- Lublin says that stigma is a major barrier to seeking treatment. In the last month, the demand for free mental health services via [Crisis Text Line](#) has gone up 40 percent. Lublin also noted that the demographics of people reaching out is broadening. "For anyone to access mental health care, they have to get over the idea that it's this terrible thing to ask for help," she said. "We want to make it easy."
- [Bettis](#) pointed out that while demand for telehealth services has gone up, computers and lack of broadband, particularly for people who are already poor, are major barriers to treatment.

A video of the call, with slides, [can be viewed on our website](#).