

Do African Americans Have The Right to Quality Mental Health Care?



Today's modern American family faces a lot of pressing societal forces which taxes the family's ability to cope with and handle the issues, as they challenge the family unit. Current topics such as drugs, gang violence, teen pregnancies, school drop outs, domestic abuse and unemployment, are the forefront of the media. African Americans face the additional pressures from discrimination, hate crimes, general cultural insensitivity, and other forms of racism. These additional factors are generally not given the attention in our society what they deserve.

To take advantage of the benefits of appropriate mental health services, the African American individual/family must:

1. Recognize the need to get help.
2. Be willing to seek out and obtain help.
3. Advocate for services that may be specific to the needs of an African American if required.

African Americans are confronted daily with political, economic and social issues that directly effect their lives. It is important to identify the potential impact on an individual or family and that everyone has the right to quality mental health care.

Miriam Robinson is an African American licensed clinical social worker in private practice in the Portland area.

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Social Security Earnings Records-Getting What You Deserve

BY MARTHA A. MCSTEEN

Have you ever checked your Social Security earnings record? If not, you may want to make a note to do so. It could mean more money in your pocket down the road.

Few people know that between 1978 and 1984, more than \$58 billion in wages were not credited to the Social Security records of an estimated 9 million working Americans and beneficiaries. Additional errors between 1984 and 1988 raised the total to about \$68 billion.

These errors are important because how much workers earn and how long they work are key factors in determining the amount of Social Security benefits.

The findings came from a General Accounting Office report that prompted the National Committee to Preserve Social Security and Medicare to sue the Social Security Administration and the Internal Revenue Service to correct those records and implement proper procedures to make sure they don't recur.

Finally, after a four-year battle, the fight is over. The lawsuit has been

settled. The Social Security Administration and IRS have agreed to implement procedures that will go a long way towards ensuring accurate and timely crediting of employee wages. Equally important, the government also agreed to make it easier for present and past workers to correct incorrect records and apply for any retroactive payments. For example, the agency also will accept a claim if the government has a record of a person's earnings in the year immediately before or after the year in question, and the claimed earnings are consistent with the worker's earnings history.

Currently, correcting an earnings error can be difficult because it requires all kinds of paperwork and records that may be difficult or impossible to obtain.

I strongly urge all working Americans and Social Security beneficiaries to call or visit their Social Security office every few years to request a Personal Earnings and Benefits Estimate Statement and check their earnings record.

A little effort now could save you a lot of unnecessary headaches in the future.

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Donate A Brick
 In last week's edition, an error was made in the "Donate A Brick" article. It should have been \$50.00 instead of \$5.00. We apologize for an inconvenience.