



## **Statement from Chair Rochelle M. Garza on Men's Mental Health Awareness Month**

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Washington D.C. -- As **Men's Mental Health Awareness Month** comes to a close, U.S. Commission on Civil Rights Chair Rochelle M. Garza issued the following statement:

As we close out Men's Mental Health Awareness Month, it is important to remember that many mental health challenges men face does not begin in adulthood. For far too many boys, the seeds of struggle are planted early—through trauma, instability, and neglect that go unaddressed in childhood. Without early support, these issues often follow boys into adulthood, where severity can worsen or lead to lasting harm.

When young people do not receive the mental health care they need, the consequences can extend far beyond emotional distress. They can lead to a lifetime of challenges—including involvement with the criminal legal system. This is especially true for boys of color, who are already more likely to be disciplined and incarcerated.

That is why I am proud that the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights unanimously approved an investigation into how youth in the juvenile justice system are treated when it comes to their mental health. This investigation will look at whether mental health services like counseling and psychiatric care are provided, but it will also go deeper. We will examine how the conditions of incarceration—like isolation, abuse, and lack of support—can cause or worsen mental health challenges.

We will also confront how racial disparities at every stage of the justice system contribute to who ends up confined, what kind of treatment they receive, and what support is available to them.

We cannot address men's mental health without looking at the roots. We cannot talk about healing without acknowledging harm. And we cannot talk about justice without ensuring care. Protecting the mental health of our youth, especially those most impacted by inequality, must be part of any serious civil rights conversation.

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