



ABHMS Welcomes National Conversation Regarding Mental Health

VALLEY FORGE, PA (ABNS 6/4/13)—At a White House-sponsored National Conference on Mental Health yesterday, President Obama called for a national conversation about mental health, which has been an administration priority since a series of mass shootings last year prompted discussions about improving the nation’s mental health services.

Conference attendee Curtis Ramsey-Lucas, managing director, Resource Development, American Baptist Home Mission Societies (ABHMS), welcomed the dialogue. “We need a new conversation about mental health services and supports—one that addresses the stigma of mental illness that too often prevents persons from seeking treatment,” says Ramsey-Lucas.

The event convened advocates, elected officials, faith leaders and others to discuss ways to reduce the stigma of mental illness.

“Too many Americans who struggle with mental health illnesses are still suffering in silence, rather than seeking help,” said Obama. “And we need to see [to] it that men and women who would never hesitate to go see a doctor if they had a broken arm or came down with the flu, that they have that same attitude when it comes to their mental health.”

For its part, ABHMS continues to encourage American Baptists to make use of “Grounded in Faith: Resources on Mental Health and Gun Violence.” This compendium of resources can be used to initiate conversations among students, parents, neighbors and colleagues with conflicting views; to provide guidance to study groups and workshops; to support advocacy to protect the rights and dignity of people with disabilities; and to inform national organizations, state and federal policy makers and officials about this complex subject.

A project of the Interfaith Disability Advocacy Coalition (IDAC), of which ABHMS is a member, “[Grounded in Faith](#)” was published in April by the American Association of People with Disabilities and is available on ABHMS’ website at www.abhms.org > Ministries & Programs > Justice Ministries > [Disabilities Ministries](#).

The mission of IDAC is to mobilize the religious community to take action on disability policy issues with Congress, the president and administration, and society at large. IDAC is a diverse, nonpartisan advocacy coalition of 32 national religious organizations—including Christian, Jewish, Muslim, Hindu and Sikh traditions—whose core spiritual values affirm the rights and

dignity of people with disabilities. ABHMS provides leadership for the coalition through participation on its steering committee.

American Baptist Home Mission Societies—the domestic mission arm of American Baptist Churches USA—ministers as the caring heart and serving hands of Jesus Christ across the United States and Puerto Rico through a multitude of initiatives that focus on discipleship, community and justice.

American Baptist Churches is one of the most diverse Christian denominations today, with over 5,200 local congregations comprised of 1.3 million members, across the United States and Puerto Rico, all engaged in God's mission around the world.