



Letter to the Editor

Ready to write a well-framed response to a news article? This guide will get you started.

Responding to news articles about mental health shapes public thinking. Letters in response to both positive and negative coverage about this issue are framing opportunities. Use these templates to craft letters that bring your voice, and the voice of the movement, to the national conversation about mental health.

Guidelines for Drafting a Letter to the Editor:

1. **Be timely.** Pick a specific news item to respond to and cite the original piece in your response.
2. **Use Values.** Open your letter with an appeal to the value of *Human Potential*—the idea that supporting mental health across society will help all people achieve their full potential. Use one of the sample values appeals below to get started.
3. **Be strategic.** Use this letter to make your point. Don't engage with or repeat unproductive or inaccurate claims in the story. Avoid crisis messaging; match problems with solutions instead.
4. **Be direct.** Finish the letter with a call to action and be specific about the solutions this action offers.
5. **Be brief.** Edit your original letter down to 150-200 words.

Start a well-framed letter with one of these opening concepts:

- » Good mental health allows people to feel good about life. It helps people accomplish their goals and participate in their communities.
- » Good mental health allows us to feel good about life. We need good mental health to participate fully in our communities, accomplish our goals, and live out our full potential.
- » Our shared vision for the future includes all types of health: mental, physical, and emotional. The systems of care in this state are a critical piece of that future.

- » We believe in young people’s tremendous potential. We live out that commitment by creating positive, healthy environments for youth.
- » We believe in young people’s tremendous potential. We live out that commitment by creating positive, healthy environments and supporting caregivers and families.
- » We aren’t living up to our potential as a society when we help some family members but not others. Let’s focus on good mental health for everyone.
- » Good mental health is a state of balance in our thoughts, emotions, and behaviors. It allows us to feel good about life, participate fully in our communities, and accomplish our goals.
- » Investments in children and families are investments in our communities. When we ensure that children have the opportunity to learn and grow, we enable them to realize their full potential.
- » Supporting mental health also supports physical health. If we address mental health needs for people of all ages, our society will thrive.
- » Our state needs a stronger network of providers who can support mental and physical health. Efforts to build health and wellbeing flow back to our communities.
- » Developing children’s health, skills, and abilities should be our top priority. Together, we can invest resources to strengthen services that help parents provide children with high-quality education and health care.
- » Taking mental health seriously in our state means taking wellbeing seriously. The programs and social supports that build wellbeing in our community lay the foundation for growth and prosperity in the future.

Consider using one of the values appeals above in your letter to the editor. Here’s a sample:

Good mental health allows people to feel good about life. It helps people accomplish their goals and participate in their communities. That’s why I was excited to read a recent story in the [name of publication] about new investments in mental health funding at the state level. Children and adults of all ages should be able to access mental health supports in their communities. These new investments give our health system the power to do more preventive work. Taking a multigenerational approach to mental health—by paying attention to the needs of both adults and young people

at the same time—is a smart way to use our resources. We need to continue to fund prevention and early intervention efforts for people of all ages. Call your lawmakers to thank them for their support and to learn more about how to support this initiative going forward.