



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**Okay to Say Opens a Discussion About Mental Health and  
Launches a Statewide Movement to Increase Access to Effective Care**

DALLAS (February 29, 2016) -- Like many other diseases, mental illnesses and their impact on society are treatable; however two-thirds of people with a diagnosable mental illness do not seek treatment. Today, the Meadows Mental Health Policy Institute launches [Okay to Say](#), a grassroots awareness movement committed to expanding the conversation and helping people find effective treatment.

Okay to Say is a community-based movement aimed at increasing public awareness about mental health issues that affect Texans and the effective treatments available, as well as the challenges and successes people encounter when they seek help for this treatable disease. Okay to Say asks individuals and organizations to join the movement and share their stories and support at [okaytosay.org](#). [By talking openly about mental health](#), Okay to Say hopes to raise awareness that treatment works and is available across Texas.

“Nine out of ten Texans think that it is more difficult to discuss mental health rather than a physical issue,” explains Andy Keller, PhD, chief executive officer, Meadows Mental Health Policy Institute. “By starting the conversations, we help those living with mental illness, as well as their families and loved ones, know that they are not alone and that treatment exists.”

For those living with a mental illness, a lack of hope or knowledge about the help that is available, as well as common misperceptions can lead to social, psychological and physical costs and tragic personal consequences. Too often, people in need and their families do not know that effective help is available, so they may retreat, try to solve the problems themselves and suffer alone. As a result, too many people with a treatable mental illness delay or even fail to benefit from care that can work, which simply lets the initial symptoms metastasize into other life and physical health problems.

Okay to Say wants to break this cycle and help people realize that they are not alone in facing these challenges. The statewide effort launches with Emmitt Smith and Mark Cuban encouraging Texans to join the movement and add their voice through a social media campaign. It’s easy. Individuals are free to add their name to the pledge at [okaytosay.org](#). They can also share stories of how mental illness has affected them or a loved one and include statements of support, photos and video.

“The first step in getting people help, is to realize that it’s okay to say you live with mental illness or know someone who does. By talking openly about mental health, we can lead the way, as individuals and as a state, in getting people the help they need,” Keller says.

The Meadows Mental Health Policy Institute is a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization that supports the implementation of policies and programs to help Texans obtain effective, efficient mental health care when and where they need.

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For more information about the Institute, please visit [texasstateofmind.org](http://texasstateofmind.org). To join the Okay to Say movement, visit [okaytosay.org](http://okaytosay.org).

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