Introduction

In 2010, the County of San Diego Health and Human Services Agency, Behavioral Health Services contracted with Civilian, a San Diego based full-service marketing communications agency, to develop and implement a media campaign to increase public awareness and understanding of mental illness and suicide prevention. The It’s Up to Us campaign aims to increase awareness of symptoms of mental illness and warning signs for suicide, promote help-seeking, increase conversations about these topics, and promote social inclusion and acceptance of community members experiencing mental health challenges. To measure the public’s awareness and understanding, monitor progress, and gauge the effectiveness of the It’s Up to Us campaign over time, Civilian commissioned Strata Research (Strata), an independent market research firm, to conduct a Random Digit Dialing (RDD) telephone survey among San Diego County residents prior to the campaign launch. Follow-up studies were conducted in this manner at 6 months, 18 months, and 39 months. For a 6-year follow-up study Strata changed to a web-based survey, and for the most recent study, the 7-year follow-up, Strata conducted a web-based survey of 611 San Diego County residents.

Campaign Awareness

As of December 2018, seven years after the launch of the It’s Up to Us campaign, 71% of San Diego County residents were aware of at least one message or ad pertaining to the campaign. The majority of respondents recalled the message or ad from TV (74%), followed by radio (27%), and social media (23%).

Campaign Impact over Time

Since the launch of the campaign, San Diego County residents continue to increase their likelihood of treating those who have a mental illness with respect, recognize warning signs for suicide, and make a personal effort to learn more about mental illness. San Diego residents also agree that the campaign messages gave them information on where to get help.

Results of Campaign over Time (among those aware of campaign)

* Denotes statistically significant difference

- Helped you recognize symptoms of mental health problems: 62% (6-Month Survey), 70% (18-Month Survey), 84%* (39-Month Survey), 74% (6-Year Survey)
- Helped you recognize warning signs of suicide: 52% (6-Month Survey), 68% (18-Month Survey), 70%* (39-Month Survey), 46% (6-Year Survey)
- Gave you information on how to get help: 70% (6-Month Survey), 79% (18-Month Survey), 77% (39-Month Survey), 89%* (6-Year Survey)
- Helped you to treat those with mental illness with respect: 83% (6-Month Survey), 87% (18-Month Survey), 92%* (39-Month Survey), 94%* (6-Year Survey)
- Caused you to make a personal effort to find out more about mental illness: 60% (6-Month Survey), 62% (18-Month Survey), 72%* (39-Month Survey), 84% (6-Year Survey)
Among those surveyed, 38% reported they had received or were currently receiving treatment for mental health problems. The majority agreed they talked openly about their problems with a close family member or friend (81%) and were supported by others in getting help (85%). However, nearly two-thirds (67%) indicated that it took them a long time to begin seeking help. The top three reasons for not seeking help sooner were:

- I wanted to solve it on my own (34%).
- I was concerned about what others would think of me if they knew (33%).
- I didn’t know where or who I should seek help from (31%).

More than one-half of respondents (61%) who sought treatment did so because of worsening symptoms or because they were encouraged by family and friends (39%).

Campaign Impact on Mental Health Awareness and Help-Seeking

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Helped you recognize symptoms of mental health problems</td>
<td>81%</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helped you recognize warning signs of suicide</td>
<td>78%</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gave you information on how to get help if you or someone you know is showing symptoms</td>
<td>86%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Showed you the importance of getting help and not delaying</td>
<td>87%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Encouraged you to talk about mental health problems with a friend or family member</td>
<td>83%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Agreement with Statements About Mental Health Openness and Help-Seeking

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I openly talked about my mental health problems with a close family member or friend</td>
<td>81%</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I was supported by others in getting help for my mental health problems</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It took a long time for me to begin seeking help after I needed it</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

What Prompted Respondents to Seek Help (they were asked to select all that apply)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Prompt</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>My symptoms grew worse</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My family or friends encouraged me</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>61%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My health insurance coverage changed</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>77%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I wanted to feel better</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>99%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My doctor encouraged it</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>99%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Campaign Impact**

Survey participants who recalled any *It’s Up to Us* campaign ads rated the campaign as having a positive impact on them, including promoting respect, support, and acceptance of people experiencing mental health challenges. In the figure below, “English” refers to respondents who took the survey in the English language, and saw or heard ads in English. “Spanish” refers to respondents who took the survey in Spanish, and saw or heard ads in Spanish.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action Description</th>
<th>English (%)</th>
<th>Spanish (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Treat others who have a mental illness with respect</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Be as supportive as possible to someone who is experiencing mental illness</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recognize that people with mental illness have normal intelligence, quality relationships, and are able to work, go to school, or otherwise thrive in their communities</td>
<td>88% * p &lt; 0.1</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feel comfortable talking to a friend or a family member about their mental illness</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Encourage a family member or friend to get help</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Make a personal effort to find out more about mental illness, such as from a website</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question my own stereotype of people with mental illness</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Denotes statistically significant difference  

Base: Aware of *It’s Up to Us* ad campaign. English N = 331, 332, 326, 321, 317, 313, 310; Spanish N = 75, 75, 74, 73, 74, 72, 74
Campaign Impact on Social Inclusion and Mental Health Knowledge

To compare knowledge and attitudes about mental illness, four scales were developed by combining and averaging individual survey items within each of four domains.

- **MENTAL HEALTH LITERACY**
  Measures beliefs about mental illness and treatment including that mental health issues are common and recovery is possible.

- **MENTAL HEALTH OPENNESS**
  Measures openness to discussing mental health problems.

- **MENTAL HEALTH KNOWLEDGE AND ACCESS**
  Measures knowledge of recognizing problems and warning signs for suicide, and where to get help for mental health problems in community.

- **LACK OF SOCIAL DISTANCING**
  Measures the willingness of community members to be professionally and socially connected to people experiencing a mental illness.

Community members that were aware of the *It’s Up to Us* campaign scored significantly higher on the Mental Health Knowledge and Access scale indicating that a majority of San Diegans are able to recognize mental health problems and know where to seek help.

The 7-year study showed a significant decrease in the Mental Health Openness scale compared with previous years. This change was seen across all sub-populations of respondents, suggesting a universal shift may be occurring toward keeping mental health problems a secret (for example, political and/or social trends influencing sentiment among San Diego County residents).

### Mental Health Scale Scores by Campaign Awareness

#### Mental Health Literacy
- **April 2010**: 3.32
- **March 2011**: 3.31
- **March 2012**: 3.28
- **December 2013**: 3.3
- **May 2017**: 3.31
- **December 2018**: 3.28

* vs. March 2017, p < 0.001
* vs. Dec 2018, p < 0.05

#### Mental Health Openness
- **April 2010**: 2.78
- **March 2011**: 2.79
- **March 2012**: 2.84
- **December 2013**: 2.84
- **May 2017**: 2.79
- **December 2018**: 2.66

* vs. 2013 and previous, p < 0.05
* vs. 2013 and previous, p < 0.01

#### Mental Health Knowledge and Access
- **April 2010**: 3.91
- **March 2011**: 3.91
- **March 2012**: 2.82
- **December 2013**: 2.82
- **May 2017**: 2.95
- **December 2018**: 2.73

* vs. April 2010 and March 2011, p < 0.01
* vs. May 2012, p < 0.05
* vs. May 2017, p < 0.1

#### Lack of Social Distancing
- **April 2010**: 2.65
- **March 2011**: 2.66
- **March 2012**: 2.66
- **December 2013**: 2.73
- **May 2017**: 2.69
- **December 2018**: 2.69

* vs. April 2010 and March 2011, p < 0.01
* vs. May 2012, p < 0.05
* vs. May 2017, p < 0.1

* Denotes statistically significant difference

p = p-value