

What is a Co-Occurring Disorder?

Studies tell us that 50% to 75% of people who have a diagnosed mental illness also have a substance use problem. In the past the symptoms of a person's mental illness and the effects that a person's substance use had in their life were treated separately. Often these were treated by different agencies.

What is Integrated Treatment?

The key to effective treatment of co-occurring disorders is the seamless integration of mental health and substance use interventions. Services for both mental illness and substance use are provided at the same time by the same staff within the same organization to ensure that both disorders are treated effectively.

ONE TEAM, ONE PLAN, ONE PERSON

Who it's designed for

People who have both a serious mental illness (or intellectual/developmental disability) and a substance use disorder.

How it works

Recovery must be the individual's choice. People cannot be "pushed" into giving up substances. Over time they can learn to manage both their illnesses and get on with their lives in personally meaningful ways.



The process of recovery begins as soon as someone enters an integrated treatment program or becomes committed to managing their illnesses.

The focus is on the person's goals and functioning, not on adhering to treatment. Individual choice, shared decisionmaking, and person/family education are important.

Co-occurring disorders are treated in a stage-wise way with different services provided at different stages. The stages are:

- Precontemplation – Engagement: Assertive outreach, practical help (housing, benefits) and an introduction to individual, family, group and self-help treatment formats.
- Contemplation and Preparation – Persuasion: Education, goal setting, and building

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awareness of problem through motivational counseling.

- Action – Active treatment: Counseling and treatment based on cognitive-behavioral techniques, skills training, and support from families and self-help groups.
- Maintenance – Relapse prevention: Continued counseling and treatment based on relapse prevention techniques, skill building, and ongoing support to promote recovery.

In addition, effective treatment will help reduce the risk for many other problems, including financial problems, family problems, homelessness, suicide, violence, sexual and physical victimization, serious medical illnesses such as HIV and hepatitis B and C.

Why it's done

Substance use disorders are common among people with serious mental illnesses and put people at risk for many other problems. Integrated Treatment programs help people to develop hope, knowledge, skills, and the support they need to manage their problems and to pursue meaningful life goals. People with co-occurring disorders can and do recover.

Results/Benefits

People with co-occurring disorders have a much better chance of recovery from both disorders when they receive combined, or integrated, mental health and substance abuse treatment from the same clinician or treatment team.

Studies have shown that integrated treatment has positive outcomes in:

- Reduced substance use
- Improvement in psychiatric symptoms and functioning
- Less hospitalizations
- Better stability in housing
- Fewer arrests
- Improved quality of life