

Co-Occurring Disorders: Integrated Dual Disorders Treatment

Implementation Resource Kit



DRAFT VERSION

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Information for Families and Other Supporters

Dual disorders refers to the presence of both a severe mental illness and a substance use disorder. Integrated dual disorders treatment is effective for both disorders. In this treatment model one clinician or treatment team provides both mental health and substance abuse treatment.

There is hope; people with dual disorders can and do recover. In fact, most people recover, and they report more satisfying lives while they are in recovery.

How does recovery from dual disorders occur?

- ↴ ↴ 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 to get on with their lives in personally meaningful ways.
- ↴ ↴ The process of recovery begins as soon as someone enters a dual disorders treatment program or becomes committed to managing their illnesses.
- ↴ ↴ Recovery takes time, hope, and courage. For most people, recovery occurs over months or years.

- ↴ ↴ People in integrated dual disorders treatment programs learn to manage two long-term illnesses and build a new meaningful life without drugs. This process requires time, support, education, courage, and skills.
- ↴ ↴ You can help. Everyone in your loved one's life can help by offering support, hope, and encouragement.

What are the facts about dual disorders?

Vulnerability is important.

People who are affected by a mental illness use drugs for the same reasons people without mental illness do, such as not having jobs, not feeling happy, and not having good skills for meeting people. In many cases, people with mental illness are more sensitive to the effects of alcohol and other drugs.

Dual disorders are common.

Study results show that one of every two individuals with severe mental illness has the additional problem of substance use disorder (abuse or dependence related to alcohol or other drugs).

Integrated dual disorders treatment works.

People with dual 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.

Related problems are also helped.

Effective treatment will help reduce the risk for many additional problems, such as increased symptoms, hospitalizations, financial problems, family problems, homelessness, suicide, violence, sexual and physical victimization, incarceration, serious medical illnesses, such as HIV and hepatitis B and C, and early death.

Self-help may also be useful.

Self-help groups, such as Alcoholics Anonymous or Double Trouble, are valuable to some people; it may be added to integrated dual disorders treatment, especially when the person has started on a path of recovery. Self-help groups such as Al-Anon, can be valuable to family members.

What does integrated dual disorders treatment include?

Integrated treatment involves a number of elements. Your loved one should receive each of the following services through the dual disorders program:

- ↴ ↴ case management, outreach, and other needed services such as help with housing, money management, or relationships
- ↴ ↴ special counseling and groups specifically designed for people with dual disorders
- ↴ ↴ education regarding medications and other steps to recovery from both illnesses
- ↴ ↴ help in understanding the effects of substance abuse on their lives
- ↴ ↴ supported employment services
- ↴ ↴ information and supports for family members and loved ones

What can family members and significant others do?

- ↴ ↴ Get support for yourself. Join a family support group and attend self-help groups.
- ↴ ↴ Support your loved one's efforts in their recovery process.
- ↴ ↴ Be clear that you care about your loved one, but that you can set limits around disruptive behaviors.
- ↴ ↴ Understand that relapse is part of the recovery process.
- ↴ ↴ Recognize that your loved one's self-esteem and understanding about the effects of substance use will improve with the recovery process.
- ↴ ↴ Have patience. Dual recovery may take months or years.
- ↴ ↴ Listen. Be positive. Do not criticize.
- ↴ ↴ Get information for yourself. The more you know, the more you will understand recovery and the more helpful you can be.
- ↴ ↴ Use your information and personal experience to advocate for dual disorders treatment.
- ↴ ↴ Work with your loved one's dual disorders team. Your loved one's recovery process may benefit from your hopeful support.

For more information

Information about integrated dual disorders treatment, as well as other evidence-based practices for the treatment of mental illness in the community, can also be found at www.mentalhealthpractices.org.

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