

## Supporting Participants with Complex Behavioral Needs

The disability-competent care (DCC) model is focused on meeting the comprehensive needs of adults with disabilities. Behavioral health is an umbrella term that includes mental illness, serious mental illness, and substance use disorder. While the DCC model defines physical disability in terms of functional limitations, behavioral health conditions can result in functional limitations or may present as compounding illnesses (e.g., depression, psychosis).

Evidence shows that physical health and behavioral health are fundamentally linked. For instance, people living with chronic physical health conditions experience depression and anxiety at twice the rate of the general population.<sup>1</sup> Within the dually eligible population, the prevalence of a diagnosed mental illness is higher than the general U.S. adult population, with approximately 41 percent of dually eligible beneficiaries having at least one mental illness diagnosis<sup>2,3</sup> compared to 18.5 percent in the general U.S. population.<sup>4</sup> Individuals with disabilities have a significantly higher rate of mental health problems due to the interface of co-occurring conditions and social factors.<sup>5</sup>

The coexistence of physical disabilities with behavioral health conditions can diminish the participant's quality of life and lead to worse health outcomes.<sup>6</sup> Individuals with physical disabilities may experience barriers to accessing behavioral health services, including lack of transportation, finances, and provider preparedness. The stigma and discrimination associated with mental illness can also cause individuals to wait prolonged periods of time before seeking help. Among the dually eligible population, those with untreated or undertreated co-occurring behavioral health conditions are more likely to have greater socioeconomic challenges such as unemployment, contact with the criminal justice system, or homelessness, and may also experience poorer health outcomes.<sup>7</sup> Furthermore, the majority of participants who seek care for mental illness drop out by their second visit.<sup>8</sup> Thus, addressing the social factors and health disparities among this population can help significantly improve health outcomes.

Providers can take several steps to improve the health care experience for participants with physical disabilities and co-occurring behavioral health needs. For instance, including a behavioral health professional in the interdisciplinary team (IDT) can support effective delivery of needed services and supports. Providers can also help improve the health care experience of these participants by learning about behavioral health issues and, in particular, the recovery process. Furthermore, plans and providers can help behavioral health treatment administrators understand how they can make their facilities accessible to participants with functional limitations, and administrators can develop directories of local treatment providers and facilities

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<sup>1</sup> Canadian Mental Health Association. "The Relationship between Mental Health, Mental Illness and Chronic Physical Conditions" August 2008.

<sup>2</sup> Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services September 2014: Physical and Mental Health Condition Prevalence and Comorbidity among Fee-for-Service Medicare-Medicaid Enrollees

<sup>3</sup> Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. Center for Behavioral Health Statistics and Quality. The CBHSQ Report July 15 2014.

<sup>4</sup> Any Mental Illness (AMI) Among Adults. (n.d.). Retrieved October 23, 2015, from <http://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/statistics/prevalence/any-mental-illness-ami-among-adults.shtml>

<sup>5</sup> Honey A, Emerson E, Llewellyn G, Kariuki M. 2010. Mental Health and Disability. In: JH Stone, M Blouin, editors. International Encyclopedia of Rehabilitation

<sup>6</sup> Patten, S.B. "Long-Term Medical Conditions and Major Depression in the Canadian Population," Canadian Journal of Psychiatry 44 no. 2 (1999): 151-157. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. "Substance use disorders in people with physical and sensory disabilities" In Brief, August 2011 Vol. 6 Issue 1

<sup>7</sup> Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. Mental and Substance Use Disorders. Accessed: February 9th, 2018.

<sup>8</sup> Olfson, M., Mojtabai, R., Sampson, N., Hwang, I. and Kessler, R. Psychiatric Services, 2009 Jul; 60(7): 898-907.

that offer accessible care for participants with physical disabilities.

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<https://www.resourcesforintegratedcare.com/concepts/disability-competent-care>***

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