



## Studies have shown that a dual diagnosis is now an expectation in treatment clinics

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It is more common today that those with a mental health disorder are also substance abusers. It is called a co-occurring disorder (or dual diagnosis).

Many studies over the past decade have shown that a dual diagnosis is now an expectation in treatment clinics, rather than an exception.

According to the National Survey on Drug Use and Health, illicit drug use was associated with the severity of mental illness. In 2009, it was reported that 31.3 percent of those with serious mental illness reported illicit drug use in the past year; in comparison to 29.6 percent of those with moderate mental illness, 23.2 percent of those with mild mental illness and 11.6 percent reporting no mental illness. Among 20.8 million people who have substance use disorders, 42.8 percent had a co-occurring mental health diagnosis.

Among those with major depression, 22.4 percent also reported dependence on alcohol and/or drugs. According to SAMHSA TIP 42, 47 percent of those with schizophrenia had a substance use disorder (four times the general population) and 61 percent of those with bipolar disorder had a substance use disorder (five times the general population).

Because co-occurring disorders are an expectation in treatment, rather than an exception, a thorough assessment is necessary. The presence of a mental illness among active substance use is difficult to assess.

Clinicians must determine if symptoms of mental illness were present during long periods of

abstinence from alcohol and/or drugs.

Integrated treatment for co-occurring disorders is the standard. Waiting until an individual has several months of abstinence before addressing a dual mental health issue has become substandard care. Each disorder must not be undertreated. This integrated treatment is not new.

There is a dual recovery group (DRA) that just started in our community on July 11. This is a 12-step support group (similar to Alcoholics Anonymous or Narcotics Anonymous) for those with self-identified addiction and emotional or psychiatric illness. The only requirement is to have a desire to stop using alcohol and other drugs and a desire to manage emotional or psychiatric illness in a healthy and constructive way. The group meets at ECHO Main campus at 315 Mulberry St. There is no charge for this group led by peers. The group meets at 6:30 p.m. Mondays and at noon Wednesdays.

According to the National Survey on Drug Use and Health, in 2009, out of the 8.9 million people with co-occurring disorders, 55.8 percent of them received no treatment at all, 32.8 percent received mental health treatment only, 3.8 percent received substance abuse treatment only, and only 7.4 percent received both mental health and substance abuse treatment. With better awareness, assessment and referral, we hope to improve these numbers.