

TRAINING TOOLKIT

FOR

OVERVIEW OF ADOLESCENT CO-OCCURRING DISORDERS (SUBSTANCE USE DISORDERS AND MENTAL HEALTH DIAGNOSES)

Overview and Learning Objectives

Both experience and research indicate that adolescents referred for addiction treatment often have other clinical issues in addition to addiction and vice versa. These teenagers often have greater difficulty in treatment engagement, higher rates of treatment dropout, disproportionate use of expensive services, and greater symptom experience. This combination of problems is consistently found in a population of individuals who have come to be described as having “co-occurring disorders”. In the early 1990’s, epidemiological data began to emerge that revealed how substance use disorders commonly occur with other mental illnesses. Initial investigations conducted in the mid-1990’s evaluated how differential treatment strategies benefited client populations who presented with concurrent mental health and substance use disorders. Historical treatment strategies, which focused solely on mental health or substance use disorders, were declared ineffective for persons with co-occurring disorders; a consensus opinion has emerged over the past decade encouraging the ‘integration’ of treatment.

The *Adolescent Co-Occurring Disorders Toolkit* is designed to support improved understanding, assessment, and treatment of co-occurring disorders for youth and their families and focuses on adolescents with a substance use and mental health diagnosis. The *Toolkit* is available to all of Georgia’s child-serving agencies and organizations for use in educating those who serve adolescents with co-occurring disorders. Included in the *Toolkit* is an Overview Training Video to provide an introduction to adolescent co-occurring disorders and the evidence-based practices employed for treatment, as well as linkages to other resources for more in-depth information.

This training is sponsored and funded by the Georgia Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities (DBHDD) as part of the Department’s support of *System of Care* in Georgia. A system of care incorporates a broad array of services and supports that is organized into a coordinated network, integrates care planning and management across multiple levels, is culturally linguistically competency, and builds meaningful partnerships with families and youth at service delivery and policy levels.

The *Overview of Adolescent Co-Occurring Disorders (Substance Use Disorders and Mental Health Diagnoses)* will enable participants to meet the following learning objectives:

1. Become familiar with common terminology and current research regarding co-occurring issues in adolescents.
2. Learn common substances used by adolescents, recognize the behaviors that generally signal substance use and mental illness, and understand how substances can mimic, mask, or make mental health symptoms worse.
3. Understand the need for accurate screening, assessment and diagnosis and become familiar with effective screening tools and referral processes, including confidentiality requirements.
4. Understand treatment strategies and the clinical experience required for providing treatment; become familiar with effective evidenced-based treatment models.
5. Understand how advances in neuroscience research continue to update treatment strategies, including the use and management of medications in treatment. (Note: A companion Toolkit is being created with a focus on the use of medications in child and adolescent mental health treatment – *Overview of Mental Health Medications for Children and Adolescents*).