

OP-ED: Treating co-occurring disorders with integrated care

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The opioid crisis continues to ravage many of our communities each day and we are missing an opportunity to better treat those struggling with addiction. In many cases, substance use and mental health issues are intertwined. It's estimated that 7.9 million people had both a mental health and substance use disorder in 2014, according to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA).

Co-occurring disorders are difficult to diagnose and treat because an individual's substance use disorder can mask the mental health symptoms that exist. However, the complexity of co-occurring disorders doesn't make the path to recovery impossible. Clients have a better chance at recovery when treatment addresses the individual's needs holistically.

Here are three reasons why an integrated treatment approach is best for co-occurring disorders:

Improves Diagnosis

For someone seeking treatment for mental health and substance use disorders, a variety of treatment protocols exist depending on the type of facility. One facility may only treat an individual's substance use disorder, but may not be aware of or have the capacity to treat an individual's mental health needs. A fully integrated medical, mental health, and substance use treatment model provides an individual with adequate resources and staff to screen, diagnosis and treat both mental health and substance use disorders.

Establishes a Personalized Path to Recovery

There isn't one set path for every individual with co-occurring disorders. Each person is different and has a unique path to recovery. Finding the right path for an individual with co-occurring disorders takes an integrated, recovery-oriented approach. This means treatment providers must meet individuals where they are and develop goals that are important to their recovery. Integrated care can stabilize the symptoms of co-occurring disorders, build up the individual's recovery supports, and provide a foundation for lasting recovery.

Creates Positive Outcomes

According to RAND Health, research supports that integrated care is the most effective treatment for individuals with co-occurring disorders. There are many different reasons why a person may become addicted to certain substances or have a mental health disorder. No matter the severity, these disorders can disrupt all areas of an individual and family's way of life.

Professionals and organizations like Centerstone are here to help individuals with co-occurring disorders navigate their path to recovery. It's a disservice to an individual to only receive treatment for opioid use or substance abuse if there is also an underlying mental health disorder. Treating a client's co-occurring disorders with integrated care helps to ensure that the full range of needs are met and that a pathway to a better quality of life is possible.

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