



SAMHSA'S PROGRAM TO ACHIEVE WELLNESS

Incorporating Wellness Into Recovery

Public Health: What's Behavioral Health Got to Do With It?

SAMHSA's Program to Achieve Wellness

Behavioral health is public health

Behavioral health refers to people living with mental and/or substance abuse disorders (including serious mental illness)

60% of premature deaths in persons with serious mental illnesses are due to preventable and treatable medical conditions ⁱ

Nearly one quarter of persons with HIV/AIDS were in need of treatment for alcohol use or illicit drugs ⁱⁱ

Persons with serious mental illnesses have health care costs that are 2 to 3 times higher than the general public ⁱⁱⁱ

People with behavioral health conditions face barriers to accessing primary health care.

Barriers to effective healthcare are due to: ^{iv}

- **Patient factors** include health risk factors and lifestyle factors; side effects of medications and the effects of mental illness; higher pain threshold or reduced sensitivity to pain; suspiciousness or fear; self-neglect; lack of motivation; socio-economic factors; and difficulties in communicating health needs.
- **Provider factors** such as competing demands, time and resource constraints; negative attitudes towards people with mental illnesses and addictions; and lack of education/awareness.
- **System Factors** include the geographic, managerial and resource separation of facilities; lack of clarity as to who takes responsibility for the physical health of patients with mental illnesses; lack of continuity of care; and under-resourcing of mental healthcare that provides little opportunity for specialists to focus on issues outside their core specialty.

Inadequate primary health care and lack of comprehensive integrated care may be related to...

Suicide is ranked as the 3rd leading cause of death for youth 10-14 and 2nd leading cause among people 15-34 years of age. ^v

91 Americans die every day from an opioid overdose. ^{vi}

The rate of tobacco use among people with mental disorders is nearly >1.5x that of the general population. ^{vii}

What does a public health approach to behavioral health look like? ^{viii}

- Strong partnerships across community programs
- Increased use of health information technology
- Integration of primary and behavioral health services
- Public education programming like Mental Health First Aid USA®
- Peer involvement
- Trauma-informed services
- Recovery-oriented services
- Increased prevention efforts
- Integration of behavioral health programs into schools
- Family education

What does success look like? ^{viii, ix, x,}

- Increased access to care
- Trauma resilient communities
- Decreased risk of adverse outcomes including hospital admissions
- Improved overall health for persons with mental and/or substance abuse disorders
- Reduced early mortality gap
- Reduced health care costs
- Healthy communities
- Decreased discrimination of people with mental and/or substance abuse disorders
- Strong minds
- Improved care for individuals with mental and/or substance abuse disorders

Public Health: What's Behavioral Health Got to Do With It? was developed by [SAMHSA's Program to Achieve Wellness](#). For more information, contact SAMHSA's Program to Achieve Wellness at paw@prainc.com or at 1.800.850.2523.

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- ^{ix} Lawrence, D., & Kisely, S. (2010). Review: Inequalities in healthcare provision for people with severe mental illness. *Journal of Psychopharmacology*, 24(4 Suppl), 61-68. doi:10.1177/1359786810382058
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