

## **Women's Mental Health: What You Should Know**

**Satellite Conference and Live Webcast  
Thursday, May 13, 2010  
2:00 - 4:00 p.m. Central Time**

Produced by the Alabama Department of Public Health  
Video Communications and Distance Learning Division

## **Faculty**

**Shannon Byrd, MA  
Grants and Community Outreach Coordinator  
Alabama Department of Mental Health and  
Mental Retardation**

## **Agenda**

- **Facts about Mental Illness**
- **Women's Mental Health**
- **Minority Women & Mental Health**
- **Demographic Information for Alabama**
- **DMH Initiatives**
- **Next Steps**

## **General Facts About Mental Illness**

- **One in four adults - approximately 57.7 million Americans experience a mental health disorder in a given year**
- **One in 17 lives with a serious mental illness such as schizophrenia, major depression or bipolar disorder and about one in 10 children live with a serious mental or emotional disorder**

## **General Facts About Mental Illness**

- **An estimated 5.2 million adults have co-occurring mental health and addiction disorders**
- **Of adults using homeless services, 31percent reported having combination of these conditions**

## **General Facts About Mental Illness**

- **Mental illness usually strike individuals in the prime of their lives, often during adolescence and young adulthood**
- **All ages are susceptible, but the young and the old are especially vulnerable**

### **General Facts About Mental Illness**

- One-half of all lifetime cases of mental illness begin by age 14, three-quarters by age 24
- Despite effective treatments, there are long delays - sometimes decades - between the first onset of symptoms and when people seek and receive treatment

### **General Facts About Mental Illness**

- Fewer than one-third of adults and one-half of children with a diagnosable mental disorder receive mental health services in a given year
- Racial and ethnic minorities are less likely to have access to mental health services and often receive a poorer quality of care

### **General Facts About Mental Illness**

- In the United States, the annual economic, indirect cost of mental illness is estimated to be \$79 billion
- Most of that amount - approximately \$63 billion - reflects the loss of productivity as a result of illnesses

### **General Facts About Mental Illness**

- Individuals living with serious mental illness face an increased risk of having chronic medical conditions
- Adults living with serious mental illness die 25 years earlier than other Americans, largely due to treatable medical conditions

### **Women's Mental Health**

- Women not only suffer disproportionately from a number of mental illnesses but also they often serve as caretakers for those suffering from mental illnesses, make many of the health decisions in the family, and play a critical role in perpetuating or breaking the intergenerational effects of mental illnesses

### **Women's Mental Health: The Facts**

- Depressive disorders account for close to 41.9% of the disability from neuropsychiatric disorders among women compared to 29.3% among men
- Leading mental health problems of the elderly are depression, organic brain syndromes and dementias

### **Women's Mental Health: The Facts**

- **Leading mental health problems of the elderly are depression, organic brain syndromes and dementias**
  - **A majority are women**
- **An estimated 80% of 50 million people affected by violent conflicts, civil wars, disasters, and displacement are women and children**

### **Women's Mental Health Gender Disparities**

- **Gender differences occur particularly in the rates of common mental disorders- depression, anxiety and somatic complaints**
- **Unipolar depression, predicted to be the 2<sup>nd</sup> leading cause of global disability burden by 2020, is twice as common in women**

### **Women's Mental Health Gender Disparities**

- **There are no marked gender differences in the rates of serious mental illnesses like schizophrenia & bipolar disorder**

### **Gender Specific Risk Factors**

- **Gender based roles, stressors and negative life events**
  - **Gender Based Violence- Domestic Abuse & Sexual Assault**
  - **Socioeconomic disadvantage**
  - **Low income**
  - **Income Inequality**
  - **Low or subordinate social status and rank**

### **Gender Specific Risk Factors**

- **Gender based roles, stressors and negative life events**
  - **Unremitting responsibility for the care of others- taking on too many commitments, difficulty in saying no**
  - **Working mothers/single mothers**
  - **Single marital status**

### **Women and Suicide**

- **Women are three times more likely than men to engage in non-fatal suicidal behavior (e.g., taking an excessive dose of sleeping pills), though less likely to use a lethal method (e.g., firearm) and die by suicide**

### **Women and Suicide**

- **Gender- Suicides 99-05'**
  - **Males: 82% of suicides; rate 21.7per 100,000; 9th ranking cause of death**
  - **Females: 18% of suicides; rate 4.6 per 100,000; 17th ranking cause of death**

### **Women and Suicide**

- **Gender- Suicides 99-05'**
  - **Male suicide rate 4.7 times the female rate**
  - **From 1999-2005, 18% of suicides were females; rate 4.6 per 100,000; 17th ranking cause of death**

### **Women and Suicide**

- **Gender- Suicide Attempts 99-05'**
  - **Males: 46% of attempts; rate 69.0 per 100,000**
  - **Females: 54% of attempts; rate 75.6 per 100,000**
  - **Female attempt rate 10% greater than male rate**

### **Mental Health & Minority Women**

- **Depression - For African American and Latino Women, it is more common than Caucasians. Higher regardless of income or health status**
- **Depression - Often express symptoms with physical complaints & other ways that may be misunderstood**

### **Mental Health & Minority Women**

- **More likely to receive treatment from primary care if at all**
- **Many Americans, including African Americans, underestimate the impact of mental disorders**
- **Many believe symptoms of mental illnesses, such as depression, are "just the blues"**

### **Mental Health & Minority Women**

- **Issues of distrust in the health care system and mental illness stigma frequently lead African Americans to initially seek mental health support from non-medical sources**
- **African American women more likely to stop treatment early and less likely to follow up care**

### **Mental Health & Minority Women**

- Barriers remain in access to and quality of care from, insurance coverage to culturally competent services
- For those with insurance, coverage for mental health services and substance use disorders is substantially lower than coverage for other medical illnesses such as hypertension and diabetes

### **Mental Health & Minority Women**

- Often, African Americans turn to family, church and community to cope
- The level of religious commitment among African Americans is high

### **Mental Health & Minority Women**

- In one study, approximately 85 percent of African Americans respondents described themselves as “fairly religious” or “religious” and prayer was among the most common way of coping with stress

### **Mental Health & Minority Women**

- Many Hispanics/ Latinos rely on their extended family, community, traditional healers, and/ or churches for help during a health crisis
  - As a result, thousands of Hispanics/Latinos with mental illness often go without professional mental health treatment

### **Mental Health & Minority Women**

- Lack of access to mental health services continues to be the most serious problem in the Hispanic/ Latino community
- Hispanic Americans use mental-health services far less than other ethnic and racial groups

### **Mental Health & Minority Women**

- They also constitute the largest group of uninsured in the U.S.— further limiting access to care
- While insurance plays a large role in accessing healthcare, culture and language are also significant barriers
- The lack of interpreters and bilingual professionals can interfere with appropriate evaluation, treatment, and emergency response

### **Mental Health & Minority Women**

- The lack of interpreters and bilingual professionals can interfere with appropriate evaluation, treatment, and emergency response
- Hispanics/ Latinos often have different attitudes about accessing mental health services, and may feel highly stigmatized for doing so

### **Mental Health & Minority Women**

- For example, Hispanics/ Latinos often mistake depression for nervousness, tiredness, or even a physical ailment, and may see it as something that is temporary
- Affected individuals may not recognize their symptoms as those that require the attention of mental health specialists

### **Statewide Data on Women Mental Health Statistics 2008**

- 102,133- Total clients served by state public mental health system (41,160 female). Of the 41,160,
  - 76.5% Diagnosed with a Serious Mental Illness
  - 12% Dually Diagnosed
  - 12% Employed

### **Statewide Data on Women Mental Health Statistics 2008**

- 16% Unemployed
- 68% Not in Labor Force
  - Unemployed means they are looking or needing a job but don't have one and not in labor force means they are not looking or not able to work or are receiving SSI or SSDI

### **Statewide Data on Women Mental Health Statistics 2008**

- Education level of women served in public mental health system
  - 18.3% Preschool-8<sup>th</sup> grade
  - 30%- 9-12th grade
    - 72% received Diploma or GED
  - 14.2% received post high school education-did not receive a degree

### **Statewide Data on Women Mental Health Statistics 2008**

- 3%-Associates Degree
- 3.2%-Bachelors Degree
- 1.1%-Masters Degree
- 0.09%-Doctorate Degree
- 0.3%-No formal education

### **Statewide Data on Women Mental Health Statistics 2008**

- **Demographics of Women Served in Public Mental Health System**
  - 61% White
  - 31.4% African American
  - 0.8 % Hispanic
  - 0.4% American Indian
  - 0.2% Asian

### **Statewide Data on Women Mental Health Statistics 2008**

- 0.02% Hawaiian/Pacific Islander
- 6.5% Race/Ethnicity Info not available

### **DMH Initiatives**

- **Telemedicine - Increase Access to Psychiatrists**
- **Integration of primary care and mental health care (ex. Jefferson County Public Health and JBS MH Authority)**
- **AL Coalition for a Healthier Black Belt**
- **Identification of Resources and**

### **DMH Initiatives**

- **Identification of Resources and Training Needs to Address Women's Mental Health Issues**

### **What Else Needs to be Done?**

- **Successful mental health recovery for women must include comprehensive, wraparound services with a case management approach that addresses women's multiple treatment needs in a comprehensive, gender-responsive way**

### **What Else Needs to be Done?**

- **Women must have safe and affordable housing, access to reliable transportation, and realistic employment opportunities**
- **Women also need assistance with child care, transportation, safety from abusive partners, and access to staff beyond business hours (NIC, 2005)**

### **What Else Needs to be Done?**

- These issues must be addressed in order for women to recover and maintain stability in their community

### **Next Steps**

- Training among gatekeepers- primary care, schools, faith communities, lay persons
- Depression screenings and linkage to resources
- Incorporate cultural and linguistic competence elements

### **Next Steps**

- Develop comprehensive wrap around services that include case management, employment and educational opportunities, and assistance with housing and transportation
- Unrealistic to assume that without these services, women will follow through and continue to seek out and receive mental health services

### **Statewide Advocacy and Support Organizations - Resources**

Community Mental Health Centers

**WINGS Across Alabama**

[www.wingsalabama.org](http://www.wingsalabama.org)

1-888-WINGSAL

**NAMI Alabama**

[www.namialabama.org](http://www.namialabama.org)

1-800-626-4199

### **References & Resources**

- SAMSHA: The Office on Women's Health - [www.womenshealth.gov](http://www.womenshealth.gov)
  - Action Steps for Improving Women's Mental Health
  - Women's Mental Health: What It Means to You
- American Psychiatric Association - <http://healthyminds.org>
- Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration - [www.samhsa.gov](http://www.samhsa.gov)
- National Institute of Mental Health [www.nimh.nih.org](http://www.nimh.nih.org)
- Kaiser State Health Facts - [www.statehealthfacts.org](http://www.statehealthfacts.org)
- Suicide Prevention Resource Center - [www.sprc.org](http://www.sprc.org)

### **Contact Information**

Shannon Byrd, MA  
Alabama Department of Mental Health  
Office of Policy and Planning  
334-353-7576

[Shannon.byrd@mh.alabama.gov](mailto:Shannon.byrd@mh.alabama.gov)

[www.MH.ALABAMA.gov](http://www.MH.ALABAMA.gov)

1-800-367-0955