

Spectrum of Health

Dear Colleague:

Our members living with serious mental illness and substance use disorders come from diverse backgrounds and react to these conditions based on their personal, familial, and community beliefs about the significance of the condition, illness, or disorder. Optimizing care for these patients requires not only medical and clinical expertise, but also competence in predicting and managing the cultural implications.

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) reminds us that “People with mental and substance abuse disorders may die decades earlier than the average person — mostly from untreated and preventable chronic illnesses like hypertension, diabetes, obesity, and cardiovascular disease that are aggravated by poor health habits such as inadequate physical activity, poor nutrition, smoking, and substance abuse. Barriers to primary care — coupled with challenges in navigating complex healthcare systems — have been a major obstacle to care.”¹

“Cultural competence describes the ability of an individual or organization to interact effectively with people of different cultures. To produce positive change, prevention practitioners must understand the cultural context of their target community, and have the willingness and skills to work within this context. This means drawing on community-based values, traditions, and customs, and working with knowledgeable persons of and from the community to plan, implement, and evaluate prevention activities.”²

The medical home is an important gateway to the behavioral health system, where management of serious mental illness, substance use, and co-occurring physical disorders can

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heighten the likelihood of success for the medical treatment plan. In similar fashion, behavioral healthcare settings are a critical gateway to primary care for the treatment of physical health disorders that, if left undiagnosed or uncontrolled, result in premature death for too many people.

Healthfirst believes that the solution lies in integrated care—the systematic coordination of medical and behavioral healthcare. Integrating physical health, mental health, and substance use treatments and services produces the best outcomes and proves to be the most effective approach to caring for people with complex care needs.

Whether suffering from serious mental illness or a substance use disorder related to alcohol, cannabis, cocaine, nicotine, or prescription drugs, these individuals benefit from person-centered and coordinated attention by their providers.

In this bulletin, we provide references, resources, and tools to assist and support you and your team in the culturally competent care and management of people with medical, mental health, and/or substance use disorders. Contact us if we can be of assistance as you promote the best health outcomes for your patients.

Warm regards,



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¹www.integration.samhsa.gov/resource/what-is-integrated-care. Accessed September 5, 2013.

²captus.samhsa.gov/prevention-practice/strategic-prevention-framework/cultural-competence. Center for Substance Abuse Treatment. *Definitions and Terms Relating to Co-Occurring Disorders. COCE Overview Paper 1*. DHHS Publication No. (SMA) 07-4163 Rockville, MD: Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, and Center for Mental Health Services, 2007.

A MULTICULTURAL SNAPSHOT OF NEW YORK CITY

(based on 2010 U.S. Census Data, www.census.gov)

8.175 MILLION
PEOPLE LIVE IN NEW YORK CITY

33.3%

White / Non-Hispanic

28.6%

Hispanic / Latino origin

25.3%

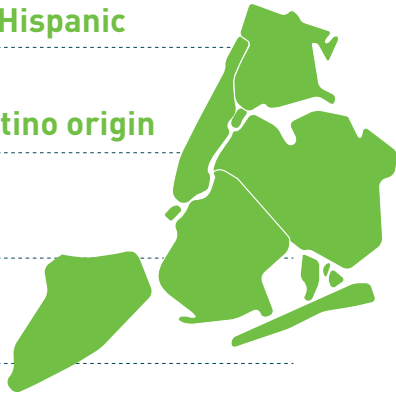
Black

12.6%

Asian

0.2%

American Indian / Alaska Native



A person's culture (beliefs, values, and language) plays an important role in how they perceive and experience mental illness and whether they seek help.

A better understanding of the complex role that cultural backgrounds and experiences play in mental illness is vital to ensuring diverse communities have access to adequate and affordable care.

Multicultural communities may have difficulty accessing mental-health services because of language disparities, economic barriers, and lack of culturally competent providers.

RESOURCES

www.nyc.gov/html/mental/mental.shtml

New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene

Links to provider handouts, education sheets, and information on a variety of behavioral health topics.

www.newyorkcity.ny.networkofcare.org/mh/index.aspx

Lifenet

Lifenet is a free, confidential help line for New York City residents.

1.800.543.3638 (English)

1.877.298.3373 (Spanish)

1.877.990.8585 (Mandarin/Cantonese)

It is available 24 hours per day/7 days a week.

The staff of trained mental health professionals help callers find mental health and substance abuse services.

www.findtreatment.samhsa.gov

The SAMHSA Treatment Locator

An online tool to help locate substance abuse and mental health treatment organizations in the community. Provides information by facility type, type of care, ages accepted, and languages spoken.

www.nami.org/multicultural

National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) Multicultural Action Center

Educational resources and culturally relevant information about mental illness, treatment options, recovery, and support for consumers and family members from diverse communities.

www.psychiatry.org/mental-health/people

American Psychiatric Association

Fact sheets and culturally relevant educational materials on mental health topics and cultural competency.

www.consumerstar.org

STAR Center

Funded by the Center for Mental Health Services (CMHS), the STAR Center provides support, technical assistance, and resources to assist consumer-operated and consumer-supporter programs in meeting the needs of underserved populations. The STAR Center's focus areas are cultural competence and diversity in the context of mental health recovery and consumer self-help and self-empowerment.

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