

Press Release

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New Information Memorandum Offers Collaborative Strategies to Address High Rates of Domestic Violence Among Individuals Seen in Mental Health and Substance Use Disorder Treatment Settings

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services today announced an Information Memorandum produced by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) and Administration on Children and Families (ACF), in collaboration with the National Center on Domestic Violence, Trauma, & Mental Health (NCDVTMH). The Information Memorandum highlights the prevalence of domestic violence (DV) among individuals receiving services in mental health and substance use disorder treatment settings and the impact of domestic violence on substance use and mental health. It offers information about training, resources and strategies for improved collaboration between systems to effectively respond to survivors, youth and children experiencing the traumatic effects of DV.

The Information Memorandum cites a body of research highlighting the intersections between domestic violence, mental health, and substance use, including these findings:

- Experiencing DV has significant mental health and substance use-related effects.
- There are high rates of DV among individuals seen in mental health and substance use disorder treatment settings.
- DV is often targeted toward a partner's mental health or substance use including attempts to undermine a partner's sanity and sobriety, sabotage their treatment and recovery, and discredit them with sources of redress and support.
- Abusive partners also undermine their partners' relationship with their children, creating risks for children's health, development and well-being. At the same time, research consistently shows that attachment to the non-abusive caregiver is what is most protective of children's resilience and development.
- Experiencing a mental health or substance use disorder places individuals at greater risk for being controlled by an abusive partner.
- Stigma associated with substance use and mental illness contributes to the effectiveness of abusive tactics and can create barriers for survivors when they seek help.

Citing these findings, the Information Memorandum underscores the importance of collaboration among state and local providers and systems and outlines strategies for State Mental Health and Substance Use Disorder Treatment Directors and State Family Violence Prevention and Services Act (FVPSA) Administrators, including:

- Encouraging mental health and substance use treatment providers to receive training on identifying and responding to DV.
- Incorporating responses to DV into state and local policy to safely link individuals and families to DV services.
- Promoting whole-family treatment approaches.
- Developing partnerships with State FVPSA Administrators and state/territorial/tribal coalitions.
- Ensuring that every state's DV programs are designed to serve all survivors of DV and their families, without unnecessary barriers for individuals experiencing mental health or substance use disorder needs.
- Encouraging training on mental health, substance use and trauma-informed best practices for staff at DV programs.
- Fostering collaboration between DV and mental health/substance use service providers.

Visit bit.ly/DVcollaboration to read the full Information Memorandum.

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About the National Center on Domestic Violence Trauma & Mental Health

The National Center on Domestic Violence, Trauma & Mental Health was established in 2005 with funding from the Family Violence Prevention and Services Act Program, Family and Youth Services Bureau, Administration on Children, Youth and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. NCDVTMH's mission is to develop and promote accessible, culturally relevant, and trauma-informed responses to domestic violence and other lifetime trauma so that survivors and their children can access the resources that are essential to their safety and well-being. NCDVTMH's work is survivor defined and rooted in principles of social justice.

NCDVTMH provides training and support to advocates, mental health and substance use treatment and recovery support providers, legal professionals, policymakers, and government officials as they work to improve the ways that services and systems respond to the complex needs of survivors and their children. For more information and resources, visit our website: www.nationalcenterdvtraumamh.org.

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