LEGACY

WORKING WITH
INDIVIDUALS
LIVING WITH HIV

HIV and Mental Health

MENTAL **HEALTH** MATTERS!

<u>This handbook is designed to help all care providers with some tricks and tips to identify, address, and refer individuals living with HIV to mental health services.</u>

Mental Health for All

For individuals living with HIV, it is important to not only take care of their physical health but their mental health. Individuals living with HIV have a higher rate of experiencing mental health conditions compared to the general population.[1]

Helping individuals living with HIV strengthen their mental health can positively impact their adherence to medication, self-esteem/worth, relationships, coping skills, and overall holistic healing.[1]
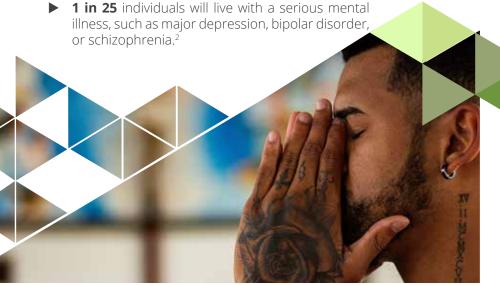
It's important to consider the WHOLE person:

▶ **Physical wellness**—physical health, medication compliance[1]
▶ **Emotional wellness**—happiness, life satisfaction[1]
▶ **Psychological wellness**—optimism, spirituality, purpose in life[1]
▶ **Social wellness**—positive relationships, sense of community[1]

How prevalent are mental health concerns?

More than 50% of the population will be diagnosed with a mental illness/disorder at some point in their lifetime.[2]

▶ **1 in 5** individuals need behavioral health services in a given year.[2]
▶ **1 in 25** individuals will live with a serious mental illness, such as major depression, bipolar disorder, or schizophrenia.[2]

Individuals living with HIV have a higher likelihood of experiencing depression, anxiety, adjustment disorders, suicidal ideation, post-traumatic stress disorder, and many other issues throughout their lives.

Common Factors that Impact Mental Health for Individuals Living with HIV

▶ Increased stress, shame, guilt, fear:
  ▷ Being newly diagnosed
  ▷ Disclosure to loved ones
  ▷ Stigma of having HIV
  ▷ Lack of education about advances in treatment of HIV
  ▷ Loss of loved one, job, or in significant area of life
  ▷ Physical, emotional, or other form of abuse
  ▷ Life transition—adjusting to the "new normal"
  ▷ Cultural understanding of HIV
▶ Additional medical conditions (acute/chronic):
  ▷ The Flu
  ▷ Diabetes
  ▷ Cancer
  ▷ Hepatitis
▶ HIV and The Brain:
  ▷ HIV-associated neurocognitive disorder (HAND or HAD)
  ▷ AIDS Dementia Complex (ADC)
▶ Side effects of HIV or other medical condition medications:
  ▷ Hypersentivity
  ▷ Change in eating patterns
  ▷ Difficulty sleeping
  ▷ Fatigue/tiredness

How might you see this in your office?

Mental health symptoms do not always present themselves in a straight-forward manner. You might notice these common indicators:

▶ Loss of interest/pleasure
▶ Problems sleeping
▶ Difficulty concentrating
▶ Change in eating habits
▶ Worthlessness
▶ Hopelessness
▶ Suicidal ideation
▶ Racing thoughts
▶ Low self-esteem
▶ Increased use of alcohol or drugs
▶ Irritability/Anger
▶ Isolation
▶ No motivation/drive

Barriers to Pursuing Mental Health Care for Minority Populations Living with HIV

Cost

Individuals perceive cost to be unaffordable, or have experienced little or no health insurance coverage.[4]

▶ "Therapy is too expensive and too long."
▶ "I can't afford to pay someone to listen to me complain."

Potential Solutions

▶ Provide individuals with specific resources available that have flexible, free/cost-reduced options, such as local Ryan White Services, grant funded programs, public health funding.
▶ Use the **value proposition** technique, "Therapy usually costs $120 a session and you have the opportunity to get it for free!"

Structural Barriers

Individuals may not have transportation, see it as an inconvenience or do not know where or how to access services.[4]

▶ "I have enough on my plate."
▶ "I don't know the bus route for that part of town."
▶ "I work all day and am only free on weekends."
▶ "I don't have anyone to watch my children."

Potential Solutions

▶ Acknowledge the individual's challenges and actively work with them to find transportation options and services that fit their schedule and may offer space for their family to attend as well.
▶ Case managers are optimal for helping provide individuals with comprehensive health resources through communication and available resources to promote quality, cost-effective outcomes.

Prejudice/Discrimination

Individuals may feel mental health service use might result in negative effects on relationships, religious/ spiritual beliefs, and employment.[4]

- ▶ "I don't need a stranger to help me. I have family, friends, and church."
- ▶ "I just need to pray about it."
- ▶ "If I use my health insurance, my employer will find out my business and fire me!"

Potential Solutions

- ▶ Acknowledge the individuals' support and honor their spiritual/ religious beliefs. Highlight the benefits of having a safe and nonjudgmental space to explore their thoughts and feelings around living with HIV.
- ▶ Provide the individual with local spiritual/religious-based services.
- ▶ Educate the individual on the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA). This is a federal law to help protect their health information that includes, but is not limited to, their diagnosis, their treatment and payment information. This makes their information completely confidential from their employer, other providers, and family.

Low Perceived Need
OR CONCERNS OVER EFFECTIVENESS

Individuals do not feel the need for the services or felt that they can handle the problem without treatment. Individuals may think services won't help.[4]

- ▶ "People who are weak or crazy are the ones who need therapy."
- ▶ "All I have to do is try to keep a positive attitude."
- ▶ "I've been through hard times before on my own. I don't need help."

Potential Solutions

- ▶ Acknowledge the individuals' bravery in being aware of their concerns and their courage to face them in the best way they knew how to in the past.
- ▶ Highlight the advantage of having more care providers on their side as they navigate through their concerns.
- ▶ Use analogies the individual can relate to, such as, "You can't fix every problem with just 1 tool (like a hammer). To build a house you need wood, nails, etc. not just the hammer. Think of additional care providers as tools to help you with your different concerns."

KEY **CONCEPTS** TO REMEMBER

Meet the individual where they are:

▶ No one wants to be told they are mentally ill or need help. You must build a collaborative caring relationship with the individual by genuinely understanding, empathizing, and respecting their desire to live a healthy happy life free from all forms of suffering.

▶ Never make blatant gross generalizations

▶ Normalize the need for additional help and encourage the individual to ask for support when they are ready.

▶ Reassure the individual of their right to confidentiality, especially from their employers and/or other significant relationships in their lives.

Use less stigmatizing language when referring to mental illness:

▶ Instead of "You seemed depressed" say "You appear more blue or down."

▶ Instead of "Mental illness/disorder" say "Mental Health" or "Mental Well-Being"

▶ Have your website, material, and resources in Spanish and make sure this information is easily accessible and visible.

Practice cultural humility:

▶ For some individuals, their decisions are not always made alone, so you want to include their family where they permit you to. Some individuals believe that all problems should only be kept in the family.

▶ Do your homework regarding the role of spirituality and religion with diverse individuals.

Personally link them to services:

▶ Facilitate the referral by calling to schedule the appointment with the individual in session.

▶ Set reminders to follow up with the individual.

What are some other challenges/barriers you've experienced in working with individuals living with HIV?

Please share and email me at

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USEFUL **RESOURCES**

Legacy Counseling Center
www.legacycares.org

LifePath Systems
www.lifepathsystems.org

Metrocare Services
www.metrocareservices.org

Parkland-Amelia Court
ww.parklandhospital/phhs/hiv-aids-services

Prism Health North Texas
www.prismhealthntx.org

Resource Center Support Groups:
https://www.myresourcecenter.org/what-we-do/health/hiv-services

2017-2018 Handbook: A Guide for HIV Services in North Texas
https://www.parklandhospital.com/Uploads/Public/Documents/
PDFs/2017-2018%20HIV%20Guidebook-English.pdf

2017-2018 Handbook: A Guide for HIV Services in North Texas (En Español)
https://www.parklandhospital.com/Uploads/Public/Documents/
PDFs/_2017-2018%20HIV%20Guidebook-Spanish.pdf

The Body: The Complete HIV/AIDS Resource
www.thebody.com

The Body: The Complete HIV/AIDS Resource (En Español)
http://www.thebody.com/espanol.html?ic=3001

References

[1] HIV and Mental Health. (2017, December 06). Retrieved August 15, 2018, from https://aidsinfo.nih.gov/understanding-hiv-aids/fact-sheets/27/92/hiv-and-mental-health

[2] National Alliance on Mental Illness. (2018). Mental Health By the Numbers. Retrieved August 15, 2018, from https://www.nami.org/Learn-More/Mental-Health-By-the-Numbers

[3] The Case for Behavioral Health Screening in HIV Care Settings. (2016, January 11). Retrieved August 15, 2018, from https://www.store.samhsa.gov/product/The-Case-for-Behavioral-Health-Screening-in-HIV-Care-Settings/SMA16-4999

[4] Understanding Barriers to Minority Mental Health Care. (2018, May 10). Retrieved August 15, 2018, from https://nursing.usc.edu/blog/discrimination-bad-health-minority-mental-healthcare/

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