



Canadian Association for  
Research and Education in  
Intellectual Disabilities



Centre for Addiction and Mental Health  
Centre de toxicomanie et de santé mentale  
Centre for Addiction and Mental Health



Developmental Disabilities Section of the  
Canadian Psychiatric Association



NADD Ontario

## MEDIA RELEASE

### Dual Diagnosis: The most common and devastating disorder you've never heard of

*New National Coalition on Dual Diagnosis calls for government support at launch on November 13, 2008*

*For Immediate Release* – November 10, 2008 – (TORONTO) – Approximately 380,000 Canadians live with a lifelong disorder called Dual Diagnosis, but chances are you've never heard of this condition before. This lack of awareness has led a group of individuals, families, and service providers to create the **National Coalition on Dual Diagnosis**, which will officially launch on Thursday, November 13 at 11 am at the Sheraton Fallsview Conference Centre in Niagara Falls, Ontario. This Coalition will advocate for a more humane response to the needs of Canadians who have both a developmental disability and a mental health problem, and their families.

"Imagine that your family member lives with developmental disability—with Down Syndrome, Fetal Alcohol Syndrome, Autism, a brain injury, or another similar diagnosis. Now imagine that this same family member has also been diagnosed with a mental health problem—with depression, bipolar disorder, schizophrenia or another mental illness. This is the reality of Dual Diagnosis," says Susan Morris, Clinical Director of the Dual Diagnosis Program at the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH) and Co-lead, National Coalition on Dual Diagnosis.

People with Dual Diagnosis are likely to have severe and complex symptoms, poor physical health, and difficulties with verbal communication. Some express their emotions through aggressive behaviours or self-injury.

Services for people with this complex and difficult disorder are inadequate, and poorly coordinated. Most require supports from family and caregivers to participate in day-to-day life, and those without often live in poverty, without adequate housing, proper food or work. Research indicated that between 10-50% of Canada's homeless or inadequately housed have a Dual Diagnosis.

"Suffering from the combined effects of two of the most stigmatized health problems in our society—developmental disability and mental health problems—places this population in a 'double jeopardy' that has kept their issues hidden in the closet and off the public's radar for far too long," said Robin Friedlander, Chair of Developmental Disabilities Section, Canadian Psychiatric Association.

Galvanized by the recent creation of the Mental Health Commission of Canada, hundreds involved with people with Dual Diagnosis are coming together in a national movement to have the needs of this doubly-stigmatized population included in the broader National Mental Health Strategy. On Thursday November 13, the four organizations shown here will formally launch the National Coalition on Dual Diagnosis, uniting individuals, families and service providers to speak with one national voice for the first time in history.

“Our message is simple: people with Dual Diagnosis need access to effective health services and an equal opportunity to live and participate in the community,” says this spokesperson Shelley Bishop, Vice President, NADD Ontario.

“We are asking for the federal government’s leadership to develop public policies, training for professionals, help for families and caregivers, and best practice research for the future. From proper diagnosis to adequate services, this is a population whose need is great, and whose time has come,” adds Cynthia Forster-Gibson, Chair, CARE-ID/ACREDI.

For more information or to schedule an interview, please contact Michael Torres, Media Relations, CAMH at 416 595 6015.

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The Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH) is Canada's largest mental health and addiction teaching hospital, as well as one of the world's leading research centres in the area of addiction and mental health. CAMH combines clinical care, research, education, policy development and health promotion to help transform the lives of people affected by mental health and addiction issues.

CAMH is fully affiliated with the University of Toronto, and is a Pan American Health Organization/World Health Organization Collaborating Centre