



## Dual Diagnosis Pamphlet

Prepared by  
National Coalition on Dual Diagnosis



Developmental Disabilities Section of the  
Canadian Psychiatric Association



NADD Ontario

## **Pamphlet**

*People with a dual diagnosis are particularly vulnerable, stigmatized and marginalized. They have a right to equal access to effective and adequate health care and other services that ensure health equity.*

### **What does dual diagnosis mean?**

Dual diagnosis means coping with mental health problems when you have a developmental disability.

### **People with dual diagnosis have complex problems...**

- They often live in poverty and have limited access to the things most people value such as safe housing, an education, nutritious food and work.
- They often have difficulties communicating their feelings, needs or wants and often express themselves through behaviour. Sometimes this behaviour includes self-injury, aggression, or loud and disruptive behaviour. These behaviours are part of their disability.
- They face the double jeopardy of stigma, meaning that they have two disabilities (some have more). One expression of the double jeopardy of stigma is that health and social service providers assume that their mental health problems are just part of their developmental disability. As a result, they are denied access to the mental health treatment that could make them well.

### **People with dual diagnosis need what everyone else needs...**

- Welcoming communities
- A safe place to live
- Love and support from family and friends
- Services that can respond to their complex problems
- A family physician that understands

### **What happens if they don't get these basic needs?**

People with dual diagnosis have very poor health – both physical and mental. The health and mental health systems are good at helping people with one or maybe even two problems, but they have trouble helping people with so many complicated needs. This can mean that people with dual diagnosis have less access to the services they need.

## **People with dual diagnosis need health equity...**

Health equity does not necessarily mean equal outcomes. Many people with a dual diagnosis are misunderstood, cannot communicate, or denied certain services. They may have access to some services, but outcomes will be poor, unless services are designed to meet their particular needs.

## **What can help people with dual diagnosis?**

They need services and supports:

- **For health promotion.** This means equal access to the things that everyone wants: safe housing, an education, nutritious food, friends and work (when they are ready).
- **For disease prevention:** Appropriate, adequate and effective education, health, community and developmental services that prevent diseases from developing in the first place - whether physical or mental.
- **For primary care:** Equitable access to primary care providers (usually family physicians) who have adequate training to help people with complex problems and meet their needs. Also, recognition that people with dual diagnosis need individualized attention.
- **For specialized care:** These are services, above and beyond primary care, that focus on certain problems, such as mental health needs, heart disease or diabetes – as only a few examples.

## **Why form a National Coalition on Dual Diagnosis?**

In May 2008, a national coalition of individuals, families and representatives from organizations was formed. The coalition felt it was time people with dual diagnosis and their families spoke with one voice. The needs of people with dual diagnosis are complicated and it was the coalition's aim to communicate these needs in clear language. Members of the coalition believe if Canadians are able to understand, they will ask governments to take a greater interest in caring for this vulnerable group.

## **The Coalition recommends....**

***Including the needs of people with dual diagnosis and their families in the Mental Health Commission of Canada's National Mental Health Strategy.*** This will offer provinces, territories and regions a ***series of clear steps*** to implement so that people with dual diagnosis can receive effective, adequate and appropriate services in their communities.

## **These steps include:**

- Developing enabling government policies at all levels.

- Ensuring professional and para-professional preparedness through training and education.
- Developing programs to help families, friends, and caregivers; and
- Funding research to collect accurate data and develop best practices.

**National Coalition sponsors:**

- Canadian Association for Research and Education in Intellectual Disabilities (CARE – ID). See: <http://www.care-id.com/>
- National Association of the Dually Diagnosed – Ontario Chapter (NADD - Ontario). See: <http://www.naddontario.org/>
- Developmental Disabilities section of the Canadian Psychiatric Association.
- Dual Diagnosis Program, Centre for Addiction and Mental Health. See: [http://www.camh.net/Care\\_Treatment/Program\\_Descriptions/Mental\\_Health\\_Programs/Dual\\_Diagnosis/index.html](http://www.camh.net/Care_Treatment/Program_Descriptions/Mental_Health_Programs/Dual_Diagnosis/index.html)