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**What is Behavioral Health?**

Behavioral health conditions refer to mental illnesses, substance use disorders, or when an individual experiences both mental illness and substance use disorder – or “co-occurring” conditions.

**Frequently Asked Questions about Mental Health**

1. **What is mental illness?**

Mental illness refers to many conditions that impact a person’s thinking, emotion and/or behavior. There are over 200 different forms of mental illness, including depression, schizophrenia, bi-polar, and anxiety disorders. Mental illness, like other health conditions, is treatable and recovery is possible.

1. **How many Idahoans have a mental illness?**

One in four Idahoans experience some form of mental illness, and 13% of Idaho children 12-17 years old have had a major depressive episode in the last year.[[1]](#endnote-1) Mental illness can affect anyone, and if you do not have mental illness, it is likely you know and care about many people who live with mental illness.

1. **What causes mental illness?**

Many factors may play a role in someone developing a mental illness. Genetics, trauma, stress, and even physical conditions (like injury or diabetes) can affect mental health.

1. **Do people recover[[2]](#endnote-2) from mental illness?**

Yes! Advancements in research and a variety of treatments mean that recovery is possible. With access to medication, services, and supports, people with mental illness can effectively manage their condition and live healthy lives. However, these aren’t the only ways individuals can engage in and succeed in recovery.

Here are a just a few conditions and their recovery rates[[3]](#endnote-3):

* Bipolar Disorder - 80%
* Major Depression - 70%
* Panic Disorder - 70%
* Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder - 70%
* Schizophrenia - 60%

**Frequently Asked Questions About Suicide**

1. **What leads people to suicide?**

Suicide prevention is mental health. It is estimated that about 60% of people who die by suicide have had a mental illness. Suicidal behavior is most often related to a mood disorder like depression and/or to substance use disorder.

Suicide is more likely when people experience stressful events such as divorce, job loss, and legal problems.

Younger people who kill themselves often have a substance use disorder in addition to depression.

1. **Is suicide a concern in Idaho?**

For many years, Idaho has consistently ranked among the states with the highest suicide rates. In 2016, Idaho had the 8th highest suicide rate in the U.S., 50% higher than the national average. Suicide is the **2nd leading cause of death for Idahoans** ages 15-34 and for men up to 44.

Between 2012-2016, 105 Idaho youth, age 6-18, died by suicide, and 27 of those children were 14 or younger. In that same time period, approximately 7,100 adults age 18 and older attempted suicide in Idaho. [[4]](#endnote-4)

1. **What are some signs that someone is suicidal?**

People often signal that they need help in ways that are deliberate, and sometimes they do so unconsciously, in an instinctual call for rescue. Some people will consciously hide their suicidal ideation, so warning signs may not be apparent. The most important thing is to have a conversation with the person you are concerned about. Don’t be afraid to ask them directly if they are feeling suicidal, and be prepared to refer them to help.

These are typical warning signs often exhibited by people who are feeling suicidal:

* Withdrawing from friends and family
* Loss of interest in usual activities
* Showing signs of sadness, hopelessness, helplessness, irritability
* Changes in appetite, weight, behavior, activities or sleep
* Loss of energy
* Negative self-comments
* Suicidal thoughts or fantasies
* Sudden change from extreme depression to being “at peace,” which may indicate they’ve made the decision to kill themselves
* Talking or writing about suicide
* Previous attempts
* Giving away possessions
* Sudden interest in personal wills or life insurance
* Resolving past conflicts

People are at an especially acute risk for suicide if they are highly agitated and have formed a plan with the capacity to complete it.

1. **Will asking someone if they’re suicidal encourage them to make attempts?**

No. This is a common misconception, but the reality is that sharing fears helps to minimize them. If you need help talking to someone about suicide, there are local and national resources:

* Idaho Suicide Prevention Hotline, text or call 208-398-HELP (4357)
* National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 800-273-TALK (8255)

**Frequently Asked Questions About Substance Use Disorders**

1. **What is the definition of a substance use disorder?**

Substance use disorder refers to recurrent use of alcohol and/or drugs causing clinically and functionally significant impairment, such as health problems, disability, and failure to meet major responsibilities at work, school, or home[[5]](#endnote-5).

1. **What is the difference between substance use disorders and addiction?**

Substance use disorders are a cycle of drug and/or alcohol use that negatively impacts one’s health and relationships as well as one’s ability to work and fulfill commitments. Substance use can lead to addiction.

Addiction is a complex and chronic brain disease characterized by compulsive craving, procurement, and abuse of alcohol and/or drugs. Long-term use can affect the brain and behavior.

1. **Who experiences addiction?**

No one is immune to addiction. It can happen to someone at any age, in any socio-economic group, in rural parts of Idaho as well as in urban centers. While one person may use a drug once or many times and with little to no severe repercussions, another person may be particularly vulnerable and become dependent.

1. **How many Idahoans experience addiction?**

The number of Idahoans struggling with addiction is staggering and growing yearly. The most recent estimates conclude that 9% Idahoans aged 12 and older reported illicit drug usage in the previous month, 7.6% have a substance use disorder, and 14% of high school students admitted to abusing prescription drugs in the last year. The highest percentage of addiction rates are for those 18-25, in which more than 14% report substance dependence. In 2017, female, Hispanic, and 11th grade students were most likely to report prescription drugs use. In 2016, nearly 17% of adult Idahoans report binge drinking in the previous 30 days.[[6]](#endnote-6)

1. **How many Idahoans with addiction receive treatment?**

For those 12 and older who report dependence on alcohol and/or illicit drugs, **only 1/3 receive the treatment they need**.[[7]](#endnote-7) Like mental illness or any chronic condition, higher recovery rates are dependent upon early intervention and treatment.

1. **What substances are common in Idaho?**

For decades, methamphetamines, marijuana, and alcohol were the main substances abused by Idahoans. However, the recent crisis brought on by wide spread opioid use has been especially destructive.

1. **What is the impact of untreated addiction?**

In addition to the misery surrounding drug and alcohol dependence, the financial impacts affect individuals, families, and society. Substance use disorders are associated with lost productivity, child abuse and neglect, crime, motor vehicle accidents, increased emergency room visits, and premature death. It is estimated that the yearly national **economic impact of alcohol and substance misuse and disorders is $442 billion**.[[8]](#endnote-8) **Accidental drug-related deaths have doubled** in the last five years in Idaho[[9]](#endnote-9). In 2016 alone**, impaired driving** crashes cost Idahoans **$1,035,673,537—about $615** per citizen.[[10]](#endnote-10)

1. **What kind of barriers prevent Idahoans from seeking or getting treatment?**

There are many reasons Idahoans may not receive treatment for their addiction. Stigma, cost, time away from work and family make up just some of the attributing reasons for lack of treatment. **Lack of access due to coverage, particularly for more rural areas of Idaho**, poses one of the greatest challenges to individuals seeking treatment. **28% of people living in rural Idaho are without insurance**, because they are more likely to work seasonally and for small businesses, which typically don’t offer insurance.[[11]](#endnote-11) Expanding coverage for Idahoans who don’t have access to mental health treatment is a critical step in taking on this challenge.

1. **How effective is substance use disorder treatment?**

Like other chronic illnesses such as diabetes, hypertension and asthma**, recovery is possible with appropriate treatment and community services and supports**. While not the only forms of recovery, scientific research on substance use disorders has led to development of evidence-based treatment and recovery services such as medication, behavioral therapy, counseling, and peer support. Approximately **40 - 60%** of individuals who complete addiction treatment and participate in ongoing therapy can **resume full lives in recovery**.[[12]](#endnote-12)

• Every dollar invested in prevention achieves a savings of up to $7 in areas such as substance use treatment and criminal justice system costs[[13]](#endnote-13)

Because substance abuse and addiction—both of which are mental disorders—often co-occur with other mental illnesses, patients presenting with one condition should be assessed for the other(s). And when these problems co-occur, treatment should address both (or all), including the use of medications as appropriate.

1. The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration *Behavioral Health Barometer: Idaho, Volume 4* [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration defines recovery as “*A process of change through which individuals improve their health and wellness, live a self-directed life, and strive to reach their full potential*.” [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. National Alliance on Mental Illness [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. Idaho Department of Health and Welfare, Division of Public Health [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration [↑](#endnote-ref-5)
6. Substance Abuse Prevention Needs Assessment, Idaho 2017 [↑](#endnote-ref-6)
7. Substance Abuse Prevention Needs Assessment, Idaho 2017 [↑](#endnote-ref-7)
8. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), Office of the Surgeon General, Facing Addiction in America: The Surgeon General’s Report on Alcohol, Drugs, and Health. Washington, DC: HHS, November 2016 [↑](#endnote-ref-8)
9. Idaho Department of Health and Welfare, Division of Public Health, Bureau of Vital Records and Health Statistics *Drug-Induced Deaths: Idaho Residents, 2016 Summary* [↑](#endnote-ref-9)
10. Substance Abuse Prevention Needs Assessment, Idaho 2017 [↑](#endnote-ref-10)
11. 1 Georgetown Center for Children and Families and the University of North Carolina NC Rural Health Research Program: “Health Insurance Coverage in Small Towns and Rural America: The Role of Medicaid Expansion” September 2018. [↑](#endnote-ref-11)
12. National Institute on Drug Abuse [↑](#endnote-ref-12)
13. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration’s Briefing on Substance Use Treatment and Recovery in the United States [↑](#endnote-ref-13)