

Supporting Individuals with Co-occurring Mental Illness and Developmental Disability: A System-wide Collaboration

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Intended audience: Individuals with dual diagnoses; Families and caregivers of individuals with dual diagnoses; Staff and administrators of agencies that work with children and/or adults with either mental health or DD problems; Undergraduate, graduate or post-graduate students working in psychology, medicine, social work or allied fields.

Session Description

Individuals with developmental disabilities (DD, such as mental retardation or cerebral palsy) often have co-occurring mental illness (MI) issues causing major behavioral problems such as aggression or unusual behaviors. Systems of care that are used to working with non-behaviorally problematic individuals with DD often need to deal with these behaviors. Mental health systems need to understand issues of communication or adaptive functioning underlying an individual with DD.

Scenarios reflecting common themes seen in our work in Hawaii with individuals with co-occurring MI/DD conditions will be presented. Complications of rural and neighbor island (outside of Honolulu and Oahu) environments will be discussed. This presentation hopes to shed light on problems and possible solutions to issues that compound a person's life and situations when both DD and MH issues co-occur.