



Philadelphia Coordinated Health Care  
a core program of PMHCC, Inc.

## **Pennsylvania Dual Diagnosis Direct Support Curriculum Training Summaries**



**pennsylvania**  
DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WELFARE

# The PA Dual Diagnosis Direct Support Curriculum Initiative

The commonwealth of Pennsylvania, Office of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services (OMHSAS) and the Office of Developmental Programs (ODP) have undertaken a joint initiative to address the needs of people who have an intellectual disability as well as mental health challenges. People who have both of these challenges are commonly referred to as those who have a **dual diagnosis**. Included in the initiative is the development of a curriculum for Direct Supporters. The curriculum is designed for Direct Supporters who work in either the intellectual disability field or the mental health field.

## **I. Introduction**

- a. Dual Diagnosis in the U.S.: Past, Present and Future
- b. “Naming It”: Mental Health Challenges and People With an Intellectual Disability

## **II. Physical Health and Dual Diagnosis**

- a. Signs and Symptoms of Physical Illness
- b. Common Chronic Health Conditions
- c. Common Medications and Side Effects
- d. Overview of Syndromes
- e. Older Adults and Dual Diagnosis
- f. Communicating with the PCP and other Medical Specialists

## **III. Understanding Behavior**

- a. Understanding Trauma Informed Care and Stressful Life Events
- b. Target Symptoms of Mental Health Challenges versus Challenging Behavior
- c. Autism Spectrum Disorder

## **IV. Mental Health and Intellectual/Developmental Disability**

- a. Intellectual Disability and Psychiatric Disorders
- b. Communicating with the Psychiatrist

## **V. Everyday Lives and Recovery**

- a. Mental Health Wellness and Recovery
- b. The Role of *Everyday Lives* and Recovery
- c. Mental Health Therapy and Dual Diagnosis
- d. Functional Behavior Assessment and Behavior Support Planning
- e. Psychotropic Medication
- f. Crisis Supports and Debriefing
- g. Stress Management for the Direct Supporter



# Training Summaries

## I. Introduction

### Dual Diagnosis in the United States: Past Present and Future

This training provides an overview of the development of intellectual disability and Dual Diagnosis services from pre-1900 to the present time. This training outlines the various movements and trends in Dual Diagnosis services from eugenics to Everyday Lives and beyond. Multi-media information such as the Pennhurst and Willowbrook exposes will also be presented.

### “Naming It”: Mental Health Challenges and People with an Intellectual Disability

This training provides the learner to have a better understanding of how “Naming It” is important to recovery and to recognize the need for increased mental health supports for those with an intellectual disability. The Direct Supporters will be able to understand their role in advocacy and support for those with a Dual Diagnosis.

## II. Physical Health and Dual Diagnosis

### Signs and Symptoms of Physical Illness

The Direct Support Professional will be able to give examples of why individuals with intellectual disability are more at risk for unrecognized illnesses or injuries. How physical health concerns are communicated behaviorally and the importance of observation as well as written and verbal communication will be covered. There will be an interactive component to this session regarding a case study.

### Common Chronic Health Conditions

This topic is to increase awareness of what chronic conditions are and how they affect people with an intellectual disability. It will raise awareness with the Direct Supporter regarding changes in behavior/attitude and lifestyle in the people they help support. Tools will be shared to help support people with an intellectual disability as well.

### Common Medications and Side Effects

People with an intellectual disability are more likely to be prescribed multiple medications. The Direct Supporter needs to know the reason for the medications, side effects and what they need to observe, document and report. This session will address these. It is important for the attendant to realize this session is not intended to replace medical advice or information received in the Department of Public Welfare’s Medication Administration Training.

### **Overview of Syndromes**

The Direct Supporter needs to be aware that there are many syndromes which people with an intellectual disability may have. During the session, there will be discussion regarding general syndromes. Medical conditions along with behavioral phenotypes for specific syndromes will also be discussed.

### **Older Adults and Dual Diagnosis**

Everyone is getting older. It is important for the Direct Supporter to have an understanding of the health issues associated with the normal aging process. This session contains three sections: general information, body systems and mental health. Support strategies will be discussed.

### **Communicating with the PCP and Other Medical Specialists**

Direct Supporters are aware of valuable information about the individual's health, likes/dislikes, wants/needs, behaviors and are usually the first to be aware of any changes in the individual, whether physical or behavioral. When an individual has an appointment to see a physician, it is important that caregivers not only effectively report the necessary information to the physician, but also document the outcome of the appointment to ensure that all of the doctor's orders are followed. All aspects of communicating along with helpful tools will be covered in this session.

## **III. Understanding Behavior**

### **Understanding Trauma-Informed Care and Stressful Life Events**

This training provides needed information regarding the understanding of trauma and how it relates to people with an intellectual disability. Signs and symptoms of trauma are thoroughly discussed and considerations are given. The development of a trauma-informed provider system is provided with recommendations specifically designed to develop a trauma sensitive environment.

### **Target Symptoms of Mental Health Challenges vs. Challenging Behavior**

In this training, the learner will understand the complexity of identifying target symptoms of a mental health challenge versus challenging behaviors. The training will discuss both physical and environmental considerations when deducing the etiology of observable behaviors.

### **Autism Spectrum Disorder**

This training discusses the core features of autism: social interaction/communication and restrictive, repetitive behaviors and how these core features can be observed. Discussions regarding considerations related to mental health challenges as well as suggestions for supporting an individual with autism are presented.

## **IV. Mental Health and Intellectual/Developmental Disabilities**

### **Intellectual Disability and Psychiatric Disorders**

This training provides an overview of Anxiety, Mood, Psychotic, Personality and Substance Abuse/Dependent Disorders from a Dual Diagnosis standpoint. An introduction of DSM and DM-ID assessment is also given as well as suggestions for the Direct Supporters on how to support an individual with these diagnoses.

### **Communicating with the Psychiatrist**

This training discusses, from the psychiatrist's perspective, the information that the psychiatrist needs from the team and the person receiving psychiatric care in order to optimize the psychiatric outcomes. The role of the psychiatrist as an active team member is also discussed and presented.

## **V. Everyday Lives and Recovery**

### **Mental Health Wellness and Recovery**

This training identifies what mental health wellness is as well as ways in which an individual can achieve and maintain mental health wellness. Mental health wellness tools and supports such as Wellness Recovery Action Plans (W.R.A.P.®) and Certified Peer Specialists are outlined and discussed.

### **The Role of Everyday Lives and Recovery**

This training for Direct Supporters was designed to discuss the importance of empathy, trust and rapport in the care giving process. The 14 components of *Everyday Lives* and how they relate to the role of Direct Supporters are presented.

### **Mental Health Therapy and Dual Diagnosis**

This training is designed to explain what mental health therapy is, why it is beneficial, the role of the team in the therapy process and the therapist's responsibility to the person themselves and the team members. Resources for locating and accessing mental health therapy are also provided in this training.

### **Functional Behavior Assessment and Behavior Support Planning**

This training provides an overview for providers and other agencies regarding what a functional behavior assessment is, how it is developed and why it is utilized. The training also provides information related to best practices in the development and recognition of a good behavioral plan.

### **Psychotropic Medication**

This training will allow the learner to be able to identify different classes of psychotropic medications and related psychiatric disorders including symptoms. The learner will also understand the importance of baseline as it relates to observing and recognizing target symptoms of mental health challenges.

### **Crisis Supports and Debriefing**

This training provides the Direct Supporter with the information necessary to: recognize what constitutes a crisis situation, utilize positive crisis prevention techniques, identify positive de-escalation techniques, have working knowledge of how to manage a crisis situation including what to do if a person they support has to go to a crisis center and know what debriefing is, how it is conducted and the benefits of debriefing procedures.

### **Stress Management for the Direct Supporter**

This training will help the learner understand the causes of stress and its effects on the body systems. The learner will receive information to help cope with stress and reduce its effects in their lives and how to incorporate stress reduction techniques into their daily lives.



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