

## Bridging Care: Mental Health and IDD

### Overview

Individuals with dual diagnoses—co-occurring mental health conditions and intellectual/developmental disabilities (IDD)—face complex challenges requiring integrated, person-centered care. Research shows that 39% to 52% of individuals with developmental disabilities have co-occurring mental health conditions, with even higher rates among those on the autism spectrum. Traditional service systems and funding streams often operate separately, creating gaps in care and support.

### Key Insights

#### 1. High prevalence and complexity

- Up to half of individuals with developmental disabilities experience co-occurring mental health conditions.
- Individuals often interact with multiple systems including education, child welfare, justice, and physical health.

#### 2. Systemic divides and communication gaps

- Separate funding and service structures for IDD and mental health limit comprehensive care.
- Limited interoperability of electronic health records (EHRs) hinders coordinated support.

#### 3. Person-centered, trauma-informed care is essential

- Tailored approaches improve outcomes and respect individual needs.

### Current Challenges

- Fragmented service delivery and funding between mental health and IDD systems
- Insufficient provider training on dual diagnoses and co-occurring conditions
- Limited data sharing and EHR interoperability across systems
- Difficulty coordinating care among multiple agencies and providers
- Families navigating complex, overlapping systems without clear leadership or communication

## Advancements & Innovations

- States are fostering partnerships between mental health and IDD divisions to close service gaps
- Expanded education and training for crisis services, managed care organizations, and frontline providers
- Inclusion of individuals with lived experience and families in program design and policy development
- Crisis services adapting to better meet the unique needs of individuals with dual diagnoses

## Strategies for States & Payers

### 1. Enhance communication and data sharing

- Streamline data sharing and improve interoperability between mental health and IDD systems.

### 2. Engage stakeholders

- Conduct targeted stakeholder engagement to understand community needs and build trust.

### 3. Expand cross-system training

- Focus on trauma-informed, person-centered care approaches.

### 4. Clarify roles and coordination

- Define leadership responsibilities across agencies to reduce confusion.

### 5. Support provider infrastructure

- Invest in technology and care coordination resources to build capacity.

## Why This Matters

Addressing the needs of individuals with dual diagnoses improves health outcomes, reduces service fragmentation, and supports families navigating complex systems. Integrated, collaborative approaches foster sustainable, high-quality care that respects the whole person and promotes long-term recovery and well-being.

## Caveats and Limitations

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### **For More Information**

For tailored support and strategic guidance on advancing behavioral health initiatives for children and youth, contact [Eva Velez](#) or [Dr. Jason Vogler](#), or email us at: [mercergovernment@mercerc.com](mailto:mercergovernment@mercerc.com).

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