Welcome to

MHW•IDD

Mental Health Wellness
for Individuals with
Intellectual and
Developmental Disabilities
Click the "Start" button to begin the
Co-occurring Disorders: Intellectual and
Developmental Disabilities and Mental Illness

Start

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Please provide your first and last name in the space below:

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Mental Health Wellness for Individuals with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (MHW-IDD)

Certificates of completion are available for each module. Please print or save your certificate immediately following completion of the course as they will NOT be available to you at a later time.

It is estimated that it will take you 50 minutes to complete this module. It **does** need to be completed in one sitting as your work will be lost if you close out this program during the middle of the module.

You can pause or back up at any time during the training but you cannot fast forward through slides. Slides will automatically advance once the voiceover is complete.

Your computer should have audio to complete the training as the voiceover presents much more information than what is displayed on the slides. Do not attempt to complete this training without audio. For those who are deaf or hard of hearing, a narrative of each slide is available in the Resources section of this online training.

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Co-occurring Disorders: Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities and Mental Illness

Objectives:
1. Gain valuable knowledge of how to support someone with an IDD who is also experiencing mental health challenges
2. Provide a brief overview of IDD and mental health conditions
3. Discuss what it means to have a co-occurring condition
4. Provide practical strategies and tools for direct service workers and other persons who support an individual with a co-occurring condition.

Outline:
I. What are Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities?
II. What are Mental Health Conditions?
III. Biopsychosocial Approach
IV. Key Concepts for Supporting Mental Health Wellness in Individuals with IDD (MHW-IDD)
V. Specific Mental Health Conditions
VI. Summary

Outcome:
By the end of this course, you will be able to implement multiple strategies and tools to support an individual with a co-occurring condition, in the home, community, day support, or school setting.

Acknowledgement: Much thanks to Andrea Caoili, LCSW, for her expertise in the development of this module

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What are Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities?

Intellectual Disability
• Typically present at birth or during the developmental period
• Intellectual and adaptive functioning deficits in conceptual, social, and functional domains

Developmental Disability
• Present before the age of 22
• Disability that involves impairments of general mental abilities that result in substantial functional limitation in at least three areas
  1. Self-care
  2. Understanding and use of language, learning, mobility, or self-direction
  3. Capacity for independent living

Across the United States approximately 1.5% to 2.5% of the population has an IDD

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What are Mental Health Conditions?

- Thinking
- Feeling
- Mood

- People with the same diagnosis can have very different experiences
- Diagnoses of mental health conditions must meet specific criteria and requires clinical judgement by a professional
- Both an **IDD and a mental health condition =** "co-occurring IDD and mental health condition"

Biopsychosocial Approach: Overview

- We should consider every aspect of the person's life
- If we only take a small piece of who the person is into account, we will never be able to see the whole picture
- All aspects of life impact each other
- Clear overlap in biological, psychological and social factors, and strengths that contribute to the person's overall mental health
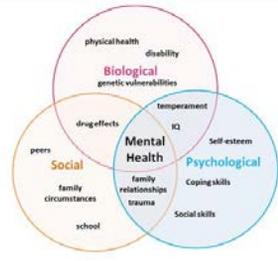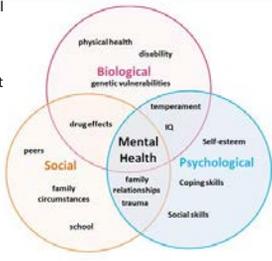
Biopsychosocial Approach: Biological Aspects

- Many mental health conditions, as well as many IDDs, have an underlying genetic or biological component (i.e. family history)
- If a person is physically ill, it will impact the way that person is able to handle the challenges of everyday life
- A person can become withdrawn, irritable, easily frustrated, and have difficulty concentrating
- In more severe cases, such as when a person has an infection or significant pain, a person can even appear to experience mental confusion

Biopsychosocial Approach: Biological Aspects Continued

- People with IDD have a higher incidence of medical issues than the general population
- Observe changes in the person's health and look for possible physical illness or unidentified pain
- Challenging behavior can be the result of pain and discomfort and could decrease or stop when the person feels physically well
- Taking extra care to encourage healthy habits can help a person feel emotionally and socially well
- When people feel healthy, they feel emotionally better and are more likely to be able to handle the stress and frustration that comes in life
- These health habits include regular movement and exercise, healthy eating, and sleeping

Biopsychosocial Approach: Psychological Aspects

- Higher likelihood of having psychological challenges associated with an IDD, which can increase the likelihood for stress
- May have challenges identifying, controlling and regulating skills, emotions and behavior
- May include challenges in planning, organizing, paying attention, problem solving, finishing tasks, tolerating frustration, and impulsivity
- These "executive functioning" tasks can impact the ways in which a person navigates everyday life

Biopsychosocial Approach: Social Aspects

- Relationships, giving back, fun and enjoyment are important quality of life factors for all people and can play a role in making it through stressful times
- This is particularly important for DSWs to remember since many people with an IDD are not given the opportunity or support to have meaningful social connections of their own choosing
- It can be difficult for the people we support to feel like they have an opportunity to give back in a way that is meaningful to them

Biopsychosocial Approach: Summary

- Stressful life events can increase the likelihood of experiencing MH conditions
- Individuals with an IDD generally have less tolerance for stressful events, making them more vulnerable to mental health conditions
- What may not be stressful to you or I could cause high levels of stress for individuals with an IDD
- May increase the likelihood of stress and challenging behavior
- Always remember that strengths and skills, along with individual predispositions can impact each other across areas of life

physical health
disability
Biological
genetic vulnerabilities

drug effects
temperament
IQ

peers
Mental Health
Self-esteem

Social
family relationships
trauma
Psychological
Coping skills

family circumstances

school
Social skills

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Application Exercise

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Key Concepts for Supporting Mental Health Wellness in Individuals with an IDD (Slide 1 of 7)

- **We are all just people and desire a meaningful life!**
- We all experience adversity and challenges and we do our best to get through it
- We all share the experience of having hopes and dreams and a desire to belong
- We all have strengths and skills and there are also times when we may need additional help and support

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Key Concepts for Supporting Mental Health Wellness in Individuals with an IDD (Slide 2 of 7)

Sewing

Dancing

Music

Drawing

Take a walk

Art

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Key Concepts for Supporting Mental Health Wellness in Individuals with an IDD (Slide 3 of 7)

- **All behavior has meaning!**
- Need to give thought to understanding the reason behind a particular behavior
- The same behavior can mean more than one thing
- It is more important to know what the person is telling us about how they feel rather than focus only on the action
- By building positive and meaningful relationships with the individuals you support, you have the opportunity to notice changes other people may not
- Challenging behavior that may exist with low intensity and frequency throughout the person's life may increase greatly when the person is experiencing a mental health condition
- DSWs should closely observe signs of stress, including changes in the frequency of challenging behavior, as this may be an indicator that the person needs additional support

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Key Concepts for Supporting Mental Health Wellness in Individuals with an IDD (Slide 4 of 7)

Overshadowing
- Overshadowing of mental health conditions – when we take a person's behavior at face value
- This occurs when people believe that an individual with an IDD has challenging behavior because of their disability rather than considering there might be another reason for their behavior
- This dismisses the fact that an individual can have an IDD and also be experiencing stress or a mental illness, or may be experiencing emotional or physical pain
- Rather than being focused on the behavior only, the DSW must be focused on the reason for and function of the behavior
- **The same behavior can mean many different things!**

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Slide 5 of 7 — Key Concepts for Supporting Mental Health Wellness in Individuals with an IDD
- Some people with IDD may have:
  - Limited verbal skills
  - Concrete thinking and communicating
  - Difficulty accurately reporting and processing
- Some professionals assume that a person with an IDD who seems to communicate appropriately also understands & can respond accurately, when this is not necessarily the case
- It is very important that the person who is supporting someone with an IDD:
  - Is patient
  - Makes the individual feel secure
  - Pays close attention to the signals the person is making, including through their actions to determine what the individual is trying to "say"

Slide 6 of 7
- Use a team approach!
- You can ask for help when needed
- You hold valuable information and observations
- When in doubt, seek the support and assistance of your supervisor or team
- Keep in mind that medications are only one factor improving the stability and quality of life of individuals with co-occurring conditions
- Therapeutic interventions, health and wellness activities and the day to day support are just as important to mental wellness

Slide 7 of 7
- It is important to pay close attention to changes the individual may experience including:
  - Looking extra groggy
  - Have difficulty standing or walking by themselves
  - If they begin having difficulty eating, drooling, etc...
- These may be early warning signs of problems related to medications or other biopsychosocial factors
- If you are worried about any of these things, it is important to report this information to your supervisor or team immediately

Application Exercise

Application Exercise

Specific Mental Health Conditions: Overview (Slide 1 of 2)
- Research indicates that individuals with an IDD experience a higher rate of mental health conditions than the general population
- Between 20-40% of all individuals with an IDD will experience a mental health condition at some point in their lifetime
- Mental health conditions in people who have an IDD may go unrecognized or undiagnosed
- The most common mental health conditions are
  - Depression
  - Bipolar disorder
  - Anxiety disorders
  - Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)

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Specific Mental Health Conditions:
Overview (Slide 2 of 2)

- **For any mental health condition, a number of signs and symptoms must be present at the same time**
- Sleep goes from 7 to 16 hours + decreased eating + crying + isolation = depression???
- In this module we will cover:
  - Depressive Disorders
  - Bipolar and Related Disorders, specifically Mania
  - Anxiety Disorders
- To learn more about Trauma and Trauma-informed Care, you can take module 2 of this training
- There is also material in the resource section of this training course on PTSD

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Specific Mental Health Conditions:
Depression Overview

Depression (also called major depressive disorder)

- Depression is a disturbance of mood that is more extreme and longer lasting than the typical "ups and downs" or periods of sadness and grief that most of us experience
- **4-9% of all individuals with IDD are diagnosed with depression**
- A major depressive episode can last as little as 2 weeks and as long as multiple months
- When we think of depression, we often think of people having little energy, sleeping a lot and possibly crying excessively.
- While this may be the case for some individuals with IDD, this may not always be the case

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Specific Mental Health Conditions:
Depression Symptoms

Core symptoms of depression	Possible presentation in individuals with IDD (DM-ID)
General feeling of sadness and depressed mood	Lack of emotional reactions, or flat affect, which means a lack of emotion or expression on face, decreased smiling or laughing, excessive crying, appearing tearful, or general irritability
Reduced interest in activities; fatigue	Unresponsiveness to preferred staff/people, spending more time than normal in room, not wanting to do things that are usually enjoyable
Weight Changes	Changes in eating routines like not coming to the table or eating much less or more
Sleep Changes	Tantrum-like behavior during bed time or sleeping much less or more
Feelings of worthlessness	Increased need for reassurance, such as asking frequent questions repeatedly; Appearing to tire quickly; Saying things such as, "I'm dumb", "I'm stupid"
Difficulty concentrating, restlessness	Increase in aggression or self-injury, increased vocalizations and movements such as pacing, decreased attention span
Thoughts of death	For individuals with mild to moderate IDD, may be a pre-occupation with and frequent discussion of the death of self, family, friends, pets or a focus on funerals. Impulsive threats to harm self or unconventional attempts at suicide may occur including running in front of traffic or jumping from windows

***This chart can also be found in the Resources section of this training

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Specific Mental Health Conditions:
Depression Support Strategies

- Focus on one topic at a time and be patient
- Give the person time to process and respond
- Plan positive and pleasant activities in advance. Be prepared to end activities sooner than planned if the person is tired. Praise the person with depression for any level of participation in activities
- Be creative in encouraging movement. Exercise and movement are known to be helpful when someone is depressed. Encourage exercise and movement on a regular basis even when the person is doing well
- Use positive thinking and self-affirmation. Help the person identify positive attributes, and help them to say out loud the things that they like about themselves

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Specific Mental Health Conditions:
Mania Overview

Mania
- Can be a part of bipolar disorder; a combination of distinct periods of depression and mania
- Mania means being in a state of over excitement or enthusiasm, without any real reason for being so
- Severe mania might cause a person to act and feel out of control, to have confusion to the point of not being able to make a decision, or to display excessive physical activity and verbal behavior
- Irritability is a sign of a number of different conditions. If someone has bipolar disorder and is experiencing a manic episode, we will see a cluster of other signs and symptoms that are outlined in the table that follows

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Specific Mental Health Conditions:
Mania Symptoms

Core symptoms of Mania	Possible presentation in individuals with IDD (DM-ID)
Elevated mood	Playful, excited, more laughing and giggling, invading personal space
Irritability/agitation	Increase in self-injury, pacing, possible aggression. Someone with IDD is more likely to experience irritability than elevate mood
Inflated self-esteem "grandiosity"	Making claims that are likely untrue, exaggerating, reporting having mastered skills which are not feasible for the person
Decreased need for sleep	Sleeping less than 3-4 hours per night, or not sleeping at all for days at a time; disruption at bedtime or early in the morning. Changes in sleep patterns can occur over time or can occur almost immediately
More talkative than usual	Increase in talking or singing, perhaps cursing and repetitive speech or asking repeated questions; if a person is nonverbal, they may become noisier, making loud sounds/screaming
Increase in goal directed activity	Restlessness, aggression, not wanting to cooperate, increase in rituals
Racing thoughts and distracted	Disorganized or disconnected thoughts and speech, quickly moving or fleeting ideas.
Hyper-sexuality	Increase in masturbation, increase in touching and hugging, pre-occupation with sexual activity. Take into consideration the usual behavior when assessing changes in sexual behavior/activity or preoccupation

***This chart can also be found in the Resources section of this training

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Specific Mental Health Conditions: Mania Summary

- If someone has limited ability to communicate, during periods of mood disturbances, they may seem more irritable and inflated self-esteem may be difficult to assess
- More attention and focus needs to be paid to **changes in sleep, eating patterns and overall activity levels**
- May instead see an increase in attempts to interact with others; e.g. interfering with another person's personal space or holding your hand and pulling you to an activity or task
- Take into account their developmental stage and what they understand as being realistic for them
- In situations like this, the DSW must be very observant and identify slight changes in behavior as part of a mental health condition

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Specific Mental Health Conditions: Mania Support Strategies (Slide 1 of 2)

- Reduction in stimulation – limit the number of people, noise and activities in order to create a calm environment
- Have brief conversations with the person as longer conversations can be confusing and difficult for a person with mania to follow
- Encourage sleep and monitor this closely. Changes in sleep patterns are a strong indicator of mania. If the DSW notices changes in sleep, it should be reported immediately
- Do not get caught up in the individual's unrealistic expectations and do not try to convince the person they are unrealistic. Use "grounding" strategies:
  o Help the person stay present and in reality
  o Engage the person about real-life things such as what he had for breakfast, the activities he will do later in the day or the weather

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Specific Mental Health Conditions: Mania Support Strategies (Slide 2 of 2)

- Recognize the emotion, not the fantasy or grandiosity
  o Arguing or trying to convince someone with mania that their thinking is unrealistic is stressful to the person and will not be helpful to you either
  o The DSW might instead say, **"I notice that you seem upset. Let's talk about how I can help you feel better."**
  o You might offer pictures of two or three things (don't offer too many choices because it can be overwhelming!) that might help the person feel better such as shooting hoops or going for a walk

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Application Exercise

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Application Exercise

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Specific Mental Health Conditions: Anxiety Disorders (Slide 1 of 4)

Anxiety Disorders
- It is the most common mental health condition for this population
- About 25% of all individuals with IDD have some level of anxiety throughout their lives versus 18% in general population
- Anxiety disorders are likely underdiagnosed in the IDD population, as worry and general anxiety are abstract concepts needed to diagnose accurately anxiety

25%
75%

Specific Mental Health Conditions: Anxiety Disorders (Slide 2 of 4)

- There are a number of different ways that someone might describe anxiety
- Since individuals with more severe levels of IDD may have more limited communication skills and lower ability to cope, it is likely that high levels of anxiety can result in aggression and self-injury

Nervous	Scared	Worried
Panicked	Apprehensive	Shook up
Concerned	Afraid	In a tizzy
Worried sick	Restless	Stressed

Specific Mental Health Conditions: Anxiety Disorders (Slide 3 of 4)

- Individuals with an IDD are at such high risk of anxiety because of the frequency of transitions they experience
  - Changes in housing
  - Changes in staff
  - Other day-to-day transitions, etc.

- Other factors that make individuals with an IDD vulnerable to anxiety include
  - An overall lack of personal control in their lives
  - Increased risk of abuse, neglect, trauma
  - Stress in social environments (i.e. isolation, bullying, etc.)

Specific Mental Health Conditions: Anxiety Disorders (Slide 4 of 4)

- Increase in self-soothing or self-stimulating behaviors such as rocking, bathing; a need to be close to a trusted person ("clingy")
- Difficulty concentrating and repeatedly asking clarifying questions
- For individuals with more significant support needs, who may also be non-verbal, it is important to observe changes in body presentation such as difficulty sitting still, sweating, or being red faced
- Close observation is needed in these situations since the individual may be unable to articulate how he or she is feeling

Application Exercise

Specific Mental Health Conditions: Anxiety Disorders Support Strategies Overview

- Reduction of anxiety or stress in the environment. It is necessary for the DSW to help the person create a peaceful, calm environment and also provide opportunities for the person to do things that are enjoyable
- Minimize any unneeded change and plan ahead if a change is expected
- Strategically managing the environment to reduce overall anxiety and stress is a key strategy to supporting someone with an IDD who is anxious

Calming
Quiet Music
Get some fresh air
Peaceful
Dimming Lights

Specific Mental Health Conditions:
Anxiety Disorders Support Strategies (Slide 1 of 2)

- Have empathy for the people you are supporting. **"Listen" to what the person's behavior is telling you**. Pay attention to verbal and non-verbal cues
- Use consistent approaches among DSWs. Communicate with co-workers about what does and does not work
- **Prevention is vital to supporting mental wellness** in the people you support that have co-occurring conditions! Pay close attention to early warning signs and ask for support when needed. Additional supports may include:
  - Encourage healthy habits such as diet, exercise and sleep
  - Relaxation strategies such as deep breathing and journaling. When used preventatively, overall stress can be reduced
  - Use praise and positive ways of engaging the person to help them feel good about themselves

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Specific Mental Health Conditions:
Anxiety Disorders Support Strategies (Slide 2 of 2)

- Let the individual have control over their own life; give them the freedom to make real & meaningful choices
- Schedule activities that the person enjoys. Make activities available to people at all times and NOT contingent on behavior
- **Relationships are key!** It is important that you gets to know the person you are supporting. Make a point in spending time with the person doing things they enjoy. Through your relationship you can support them to identify their inherent strengths to learn about themselves and to develop a positive sense of identity along with fostering creativity and imagination

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Specific Mental Health Conditions:
Relationships

- Having genuine relationships is key to helping achieve mental wellness
- It is important to recognize that your role in the relationship is inherently one of unequal power
- **It is essential that you build trust**
- This comes from showing dignity and respect to the person, ensuring safety, providing opportunities for learning and growth, supporting them in making choices for themselves, and being clear and consistent regardless of the emotion involved or situation at hand
- Consistency in your relationship
  - Provides an opportunity to model what a relationship should look like between the person and others
  - Decrease anxiety so he or she always knows what to expect

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Co-occurring Disorders: Summary

- Individuals with IDD are much more likely to have a mental health condition than the general population, even though they are less likely to be diagnosed
- The most common mental health conditions for people with IDD are Depression, Bipolar and Anxiety disorders, as well as trauma
- Mental health conditions present differently in everyone. **Close observation on the part of the DSW is very valuable!**
- Changes in overall mental health can increase the likelihood that someone with IDD will act in a way that could cause harm to self or others
- Understanding the bio, psycho, and social factors that make up a person will greatly increase your ability to support the person effectively
- There are many positive, strength-focused approaches that can be used with individuals with IDD who have challenging behavior, no matter the diagnosis
- Even when situations are challenging, approach them with a positive attitude and with empathy and understanding towards the individual you are supporting

Acknowledgement: Much thanks to Andrea Caoili, LCSW, for her expertise in the development of this module

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