

Get the Facts!

On Older Adults and Mental Illness

#1 of 4 - The Elders are Coming!! The Elders are Coming!!

1. Nationally, older adults (persons 65 years and older) number almost 35 million or about 12.7% of the population. TN mirrors those population rates.

2. By 2030, with the “baby-boom” generation fully retired, it is estimated that persons over 65 will represent about 20% of the US population. In TN, the projected population of seniors is expected to rise up to approximately 1,400,000.

3. Overall about 1 in 5 older adults (20%) experience a mental disorder. Yet only, 1.5% seek traditional treatment due to barriers including stigma, denial of problems, access barriers, funding issues, lack of collaboration between mental health and aging networks, and shortages of appropriate health professionals.



The Mental Health and Aging Coalition of Middle Tennessee

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#2 of 4 - Mental Disorders/Substance Abuse on the Rise!

1. Across all age groups in the U.S., the annual cost of untreated mental illness exceeds \$300 billion in lost productivity and in healthcare and societal costs. Mental disorders in older people are among the most expensive public health problems

2. Depression and anxiety are the most common mental illnesses in older people. The consequences of depression: 3x as much health care use, 2x the medical costs, and 3x as many deaths after heart attack. Seniors have the highest suicide rate of any age group.

3. Estimates indicate that 2-10 % of the populations, 6-11% of the seniors admitted into hospitals, 20% admitted into psychiatric hospitals, and 14% seen in the Emergency room show signs of alcohol or drug abuse.



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#3 of 4 - Costs Skyrocket!

1. Treatment does work, and the need for specialized mental health and substance abuse services for elders has been established in the Surgeon General's Report on Older Adults and by the U.S. Administration on Aging.

2. In 1999, seniors spent 19% of their income on healthcare costs, excluding costs for home care and long-term nursing services. For those under the poverty line, the percentage spent on healthcare increases to 33% of their income.

3. Medicare only covers 50% of mental health services and does not cover prescriptions. Many older adults are not able to afford Medigap insurance. And for older adults who are eligible for TennCare assistance barriers still exist; including limited access to care based in home or non-office settings and limitations imposed by managed care.



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#4 of 4 - Stop the Coming Disaster!

1. Older adults and their caregivers do not receive a proportional share of existing state (TDMHDD) mental health resources. Although older adults comprise 12 % of the current population, less than 2% of the state (TDMHDD) dollars are directed specifically to services for this population.

2. TDMHDD policy, including TennCare Partners Program, must be adopted and reflect the unique mental health needs of older Tennesseans and their caregivers. It is essential to establish a priority recognizing that seniors should have equal access to needed mental health services and supports.

3. The current service delivery system must be enhanced and designed to address the needs and characteristics of the older population, and to promote accurate and early identifi-



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