

Understanding and Responding to Mental Health Concerns of Members

The Ohio Commission on Service and Volunteerism
Program Directors' Meeting
Friday April 13, 2012

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Overview of Presentation

- Major mental health disorders
- What to look for
- How to respond and accommodate
- Potential resources

Major Mental Health Disorders

- An estimated 54 million (20%) Americans experience from some form of mental disorder in a given year
- There are more than 200 classified forms of mental illness

Job Accommodation Network, 2007

Major Mental Health Disorders

Anxiety disorders

- **Panic disorder**
 - Panic attacks- sweating, chest pain, palpitations, usually occurring suddenly and without warning
- **Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD)**
 - Disturbing thoughts are called obsessions and rituals are called compulsions
- **Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)**
 - A condition following a traumatic or terrifying event, i.e. sexual or physical assault, unexpected death of loved one, natural disaster, response to combat
- **Social Anxiety Disorder**
 - Includes social phobias such as agoraphobia
- **Specific Phobias**
 - Snakes, heights, flying
- **Generalized Anxiety Disorder**
 - Involves excessive worry and tension even though there is little or nothing to provoke anxiety

Major Mental Health Disorders

Mood Disorders

Bipolar disorder

- Includes increased restlessness, energy, talkativeness, recklessness, and powerful euphoria. Lavish spending sprees or impulsive risky sex can occur. Can spiral into something darker -- irritation, confusion, anger, feeling trapped. "Depression" describes the opposite mood -- sadness, crying, sense of worthlessness, loss of energy, loss of pleasure, sleep problems.

Depression

- Persistent sadness, pessimism
- Feelings of guilt, worthlessness, helplessness, or hopelessness
- Loss of interest or pleasure in usual activities, including sex
- Difficulty concentrating and complaints of poor memory
- Worsening of co-existing chronic disease, ex. rheumatoid arthritis or diabetes
- Insomnia or oversleeping
- Weight gain or loss
- Fatigue, lack of energy
- Anxiety, agitation, irritability
- Thoughts of suicide or death
- Slow speech; slow movements
- Headache, stomachache, and digestive problems

Major Mental Health Disorders

Psychotic Disorders

Schizophrenia

- People with this illness have changes in behavior and other symptoms -- such as delusions and hallucinations -- that last longer than six months, usually with a decline in work, school, and social functioning. This disorder often manifests during late teens and early 20s.

Major Mental Health Disorders

Personality Disorders

- Paranoid Personality Disorder
- Schizoid Personality Disorder
- Schizotypal Personality Disorder
- Antisocial Personality Disorder
- Borderline Personality Disorder
- Histrionic Personality Disorder
- Narcissistic Personality Disorder
- Avoidant Personality Disorder
- Dependent Personality Disorder
- Obsessive-Compulsive Personality Disorder

Other Disorders

- Eating disorders
 - Anorexia, Bulimia
- Attention Deficit/ Hyperactivity (ADHD)
- Asperger's Syndrome
- Tourette's Disorder
- Conduct Disorder

Persons with mental health disorders may have difficulty with learning and performance

- Making decisions and initiating action
- Processing and retaining information
- Concentrating (distractibility)
- Organization and planning
- Following directions
- Managing stimulation and stress
- Communicating needs and wants
- Impairment of insight and judgment
- Other cognitive problems

Persons with mental health disorders may have interpersonal issues

- Interacting with supervisors, co-workers, and customers
- Responding to authority
- Resolving conflicts
- Alienated from feelings
- Social isolation or withdrawal
- Peculiar or bizarre behaviors
- Dysfunctional personality traits
- Suspiciousness/paranoia
- Decreased concern for hygiene

Persons with mental health disorders may have **physical issues**

- Physical restlessness
- Sleep disturbance
- Slowed gait or awkward movements

Practical Suggestions for Observing, Interacting with, and Supporting Members

- Don't try to be a junior psychiatrist
- Tell people you care and that you will do everything within your power to help
- Sometimes listening is better than responding
- Referrals are not always the best answer and may simply be a way for you not to have to deal with the situation
- While the human spirit can be very fragile it can also be extremely resilient
- There is always something you can do to help so don't just automatically throw up your hands
- Being a good observer and documenter of data can be very important

Potential Accommodations

Flexible Scheduling

- Part time work or job sharing
- Frequent or flexible breaks
- Changes in start/finish times
- Time off for appointments
- Flexible policies for paid or unpaid leave

Potential Accommodations

Supervision and Job Structuring

- Extra supervision
- Providing written assignments or instructions
- Breaking down assignments into smaller tasks
- Use of checklists
- Providing frequent feedback

Potential Accommodations

Modified Work Environment

- Allowing employees to eat or drink as needed
- Allowing phone calls at work for information or support
- Work at home to minimize stimuli
- Workspace with walls or sound barriers
- Opportunities for movement
- Give choices regarding work area

Potential Accommodations

Assistive Technology

- PC to compensate for tremors
- Magnifying devices, large print
- Earphones, radio, white noise
- Non-glare work or flooring surfaces
- Watch, computer, beeper with prompts
- Noise modulation
- Simple ergonomic modifications

Scenario 1

- Nora is a 23 year old recent college grad with a degree in art history. Shortly after starting AmeriCorps she began arriving at work 10 to 20 minutes late almost daily. When confronted, she shared how tired she always felt and how difficult it was for her to wake up. Other members had observed that Nora seemed to be somewhat apathetic and disinterested in her work.

Scenario 2

- Raul is a 32 year old former army medic having served 2 tours in Iraq. Raul sometimes comes across as being overly helpful. He constantly is wanting to work overtime and is asking for more to do. His non-stop energy is only surpassed by his belief that he can make the world a better place to live if he only works hard enough. Raul often uses the phrase “my mission in life”. He often mentions only needing 3-4 hours of sleep a night.

Scenario 3

- Choral attends community college and is also a half time AmeriCorps member. At age 20 she is the youngest member in our corps. She has been observed as having certain rituals during her job performance such as always washing her hands and straightening up her work site.

Resources

- Job Accommodation Network; check out the “Toolbox”
 - <http://janweb.icdi.wvu.edu/>
- NAMI- National Alliance on Mental Illness
 - www.nami.org
- National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH)
 - www.nimh.nih.gov
- Menninger Center- world leader in psychiatric treatment, research and education located in Texas
 - www.menningerclinic.com
- American Psychiatric Association
 - www.psych.org
- Ohio Department of Mental Health
 - www.mh.state.oh.us
- ADAMH- Alcohol, Drug and Mental Health Board of Franklin County
 - www.adamhfranklin.org