

# TRAUMA FACTS

The President's New Freedom Commission on Mental Health identified the need for states to address trauma and become trauma informed systems of care. From that report, SAMHSA and NASMHPD developed and issued toolkits and essential elements for states to use in the conversion of their mental health and addictions systems. Here are some trauma facts issued by SAMHSA, NASMHPD and the National Center for Trauma Informed Care (NCTIC):

- Traumatic experiences often involve a threat to life or safety, but any situation that leaves us feeling overwhelmed and alone can be traumatic, even if it doesn't involve physical harm. It's not the objective facts that determine whether an event is traumatic, but our subjective emotional experience of the event. The more frightened and helpless you feel, the more likely you are to be traumatized.
- Many providers may be under the impression that abuse experiences are an additional problem for their clients, rather than the *central* problem.
- Up to two-thirds of both men and women in substance abuse treatment report childhood abuse or neglect.
- 97% of women who have a mental illness and are homeless have experienced severe physical and/or sexual abuse, and 87% experienced this abuse both as children and as adults.
- 75% of women in treatment programs for drug and alcohol abuse report having been sexually abused.
- HMO adult members who had experienced multiple childhood exposures to abuse and violence had a 4- to 12-fold increased risk of alcoholism and drug abuse, and a 2- to 4-fold increase in smoking.
- Among juvenile girls identified by the courts as delinquent, more than 75% have been sexually abused.
- About 3.9 million adolescents have been victims of a serious physical assault, and almost 9 million have witnessed an act of serious violence.
- In a sample of 100 male and female subjects receiving treatment for substance abuse, more than a third were diagnosed with some form of a dissociative disorder stemming from childhood sexual or physical abuse.
- As many as 80% of individuals in psychiatric hospitals have experienced physical or sexual abuse, most of them as children.
- The majority of adults diagnosed with Borderline Personality Disorder (81%) or Dissociative Identity Disorder (90%) were abused as children.
- Nearly 90% of women diagnosed with alcoholism were sexually abused as children or suffered severe violence at the hands of a parent.
- Boys who experience or witness violence are 1,000 times more likely to commit violence than those who do not.
- The level of exposure to catastrophic violence and loss together with the resulting posttraumatic stress have been found to be as severe in America's inner cities as in post-earthquake Armenia, war-torn Bosnia, post-invasion Kuwait and other trauma zones. Yet, the United States has no formal public health policy to address the problem
- Not all potentially traumatic events lead to lasting emotional and psychological damage. Some people rebound quickly from even the most tragic and shocking experiences. People can and do recover from the effects of trauma if they receive the right services and support.

Trauma-specific interventions are designed specifically to address the consequences of trauma in the individual and to facilitate healing. Treatment programs generally recognize the following:

- The survivors need to be respected, informed, connected, and hopeful regarding their own recovery
- The interrelation between trauma and symptoms of trauma (e.g., substance abuse, eating disorders, depression, and anxiety)
- The need to work in a collaborative way with survivors, family and friends of the survivor and other human services agencies in a manner that will empower survivors and consumers