**Blogpost: For Mental Health and Substance Use Disorder Treatment Partner Organizations and Agencies**

**A Call for Collaboration at the Intersections of Domestic Violence, Mental Health, and Substance Use**

* *30 to 60 percent of people accessing services in mental health treatment settings have reported experiencing domestic violence in their lifetime.*
* *47 to 90 percent of women accessing services in substance use treatment settings have experienced domestic violence in their lifetime.*

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) and the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) partnered with experts from the National Center on Domestic Violence, Trauma & Mental Health to produce an Information Memorandum calling for collaboration between practitioners, State Mental Health and State Substance Use Disorder Treatment Directors; State Family Violence Prevention and Services Act (FVPSA) Administrators; and state, territory and tribal DV/SA coalitions. For the past 35 years, research has consistently shown that being victimized by an intimate partner increases a person’s risk for depression, PTSD, substance use disorders, including opioid use disorder, suicidality, chronic pain and other chronic health conditions. Yet, integrated approaches to addressing these complex issues are often few and far between.

The Information Memorandum summarizes key research findings on the intersection of domestic violence, substance use and mental health, including the following:

* Domestic violence can have significant mental health and substance use-related effects.
* There are high rates of domestic violence among individuals accessing services in mental health and substance use disorder treatment settings.
* Domestic violence is often targeted toward undermining a partner’s mental health or substance use disorder treatment and recovery.
* Abusive partners actively try to undermine their partners’ relationship with their children, creating risks for children’s health, development and well-being. At the same time, research consistently shows that attachment to the non-abusive caregiver is what is most protective of children’s resilience and development.
* Experiencing a mental health or substance use disorder places individuals at greater risk for being controlled by an abusive partner.
* Stigma associated with substance use and mental illness contributes to the effectiveness of abusive tactics and can create barriers for survivors when they seek help.

To address the critical intersections between domestic violence, substance use and mental health, this Information Memorandum offers resources, training opportunities and strategies for action, including:

* Fostering collaboration and encouraging mental health and substance use providers to receive training on identifying and responding to domestic violence in their work.
* Incorporating responses to domestic violence into state and local policy for mental health services and substance use treatment to safely link individuals and families to domestic violence services.
* Promoting whole-family treatment approaches that allow survivors to access treatment and maintain custody of their children.
* Developing partnerships with State FVPSA Administrators and state/territorial/tribal domestic violence coalitions.

Ultimately**,** optimally serving individuals, children and families affected by domestic violence requires services that incorporate the expertise of the mental health, substance use disorder, and domestic violence fields while attending the unique issues faced by domestic violence survivors and their children. This also means creating services that are fully accessible, gender responsive, culturally attuned, and trauma informed and grounded in the needs of survivors, their families and their communities. We will all be better equipped to meet the needs of domestic violence survivors and their children if we work together.

Read the full Information Memorandum at [bit.ly/DVcollaboration](http://www.nationalcenterdvtraumamh.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/ACF-SAMHSA-Signed-Intersection-of-DV-MH-SU-01.18.2019.pdf)

Download the Information Memorandum Partner Guide at <https://bit.ly/2Ong9QL>