

THE CHALLENGES OF SUBSTANCE USE IN THE OLDER ADULT POPULATION

DATE & TIME:

September 16, 2026

11:30AM – 12:30PM

*Sign-in begins 15 minutes prior to the training time. All participants must arrive during the sign-in period.
Late arrivals will not be admitted.*

PLACE: Web Broadcast – Microsoft Teams

REGISTRATION: [EventsHub Registration Link](#)

DESCRIPTION: Substance use disorders among older adults (defined here as adults age 60 and older) are an increasingly recognized public health concern. Older adults with substance use disorders generally fall into two broad groups: those with longstanding substance use that has continued into later life, and those who develop problematic substance use in response to later-life stressors or transitions. This training provides an overview of the substances most commonly used and misused by older adults and explores the role of ageism, stigma, and other barriers that contribute to under-recognition and under-treatment. Participants will examine age-related physiological changes that increase susceptibility to substance-related harms, as well as medical, psychiatric, and cognitive conditions that may mimic or mask substance misuse. Special attention will be given to prescription medications, polypharmacy, and interactions involving alcohol, benzodiazepines, opioids, cannabis, and other commonly used substances. The training will also explore the impact of retirement, grief, chronic pain, social isolation, and other life transitions on substance use, while highlighting protective factors, trauma-informed care, and multidisciplinary strategies that promote recovery and healthy aging.

TARGET AUDIENCE: DMH and contract providers currently serving Older Adult clients

OBJECTIVES: As a result of attending this training, participants should be able to:

1. List at least three signs of substance misuse in older adults that may be mistaken for normal aging, cognitive impairment, or dementia.
2. Identify at least three life transitions or psychosocial stressors associated with increased risk of substance misuse in later life.
3. Describe age-related physiological changes and medication-related factors that increase vulnerability to substance-related harm in older adults.
4. Identify at least three protective factors or intervention strategies that support recovery and healthy aging.

CONDUCTED BY: Jennifer B. Dragonette, Psy.D.

COORDINATED BY: Dustin Jones – Training Coordinator
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DEADLINE: When capacity is reached.

**CONTINUING
EDUCATION:** **1.0 hour for BBS, BRN, CCAPP-EI
1.0 CE for Psychologist**

COST: **NONE**