

Meeting the Needs of People with Intellectual Disabilities and Co-occurring Mental Health Diagnoses

Children and adults who experience complex mental health needs in addition to a developmental disability often require a very intensive and specialized support system.

An increasing number of children and adults served through Community Crossroads experience not only a developmental disability (DD) like Autism Spectrum Disorder, Severe Learning Disabilities, Brain injuries, or other cognitive disabilities, but have a co-occurring mental health diagnosis as well (dual diagnosis). They often require a strong and collaborative approach between service provider agencies and mental health practitioners.

The co-occurring conditions and circumstances may include:

- *Anxiety*
- *An eating disorder*
- *Depression*
- *Schizophrenia*
- *Persons having had a psychiatric hospitalization in their past*
- *A history of Suicidal Ideation*
- *People already receiving mental health services*

Some children and adults with these types of dual diagnoses can also have trouble communicating and easily expressing their frustrations, feelings, fears, etc. When communication breaks down sometimes self-injurious or aggressive behaviors take its place. These behaviors may cause harm to the individuals themselves, their caregivers, and their families. They need intensive mental health services in addition to the traditional types of supports the Area Agency system was originally designed to provide.

Community Crossroads has therefore built a strategic alliance with Center for Life Management (CLM), our local mental health center, and local providers to implement a comprehensive system of support around each person. The goal of these services is to help people remain as independent as possible and live a good life. The mental health providers bring the knowledgeable clinicians who provide medication administration, assessment, psychotherapists and other treatment professionals. *Community Crossroads* connects individuals and their families with more traditional DD supports, like securing providers who supply highly specialized, more intensively trained Direct Support Professionals (DSP) to assist the person with daily living and help them be engaged within their communities. Although these types of comprehensive, wraparound services result in higher individual budgets, they also contribute to keeping people out of even higher cost residential placements.