Smoking, Mental Illness, & Substance Use Disorders

Tobacco use is the single most preventable cause of death and disease in the United States, claiming 480,000 lives every year.\(^1\) The impact of tobacco on Indiana is staggering, causing approximately 11,100 deaths annually.\(^2\) Smoking prevalence remains significantly higher among individuals with mental illness and substance use disorders.\(^3\) On average, people with serious mental illness die 25 years younger than the general population – often due to conditions caused or exacerbated by tobacco use.\(^4\)

**Current Smoking among Adults with Mental Illness (Indiana and United States)**

- About 1 in 5 adults in the U.S. (19.9%) and in Indiana (22.3%) have any mental illness.\(^5\)
- In both Indiana and the United States, adults with mental illness smoke at much higher rates than adults without mental illness.\(^5\)
- Individuals with mental illness or substance use disorder smoke nearly 40% of all cigarettes smoked in the United States.\(^3\)

**Current Smoking and Other Substance Use**

Tobacco use is strongly associated with abuse of other substances such as alcohol and illicit drugs.

- Among current smokers age 12 or older in the U.S.:
  - 24.1% report illicit drug use compared with 5.4% of non smokers\(^6\)
  - 42.9% report binge drinking compared with 17.5% of non smokers\(^6\)
  - 15.7% report heavy alcohol use compared with 3.8% of non smokers\(^6\)

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*Mental illness is defined as a diagnosable mental, behavioral, or emotional disorder.*
Poor Mental Health Status and Current Smoking among Indiana Adults

In addition to higher prevalence of current smoking among adults with a diagnosable mental illness, Indiana adults reporting frequent poor mental health days (at least 14 poor mental health days in the past thirty days) smoke at over 2 times the rate of adults who do not have frequent poor mental health days.

Treatment for Tobacco Users with Mental Illness or Substance Use Disorders

Although research shows that tobacco users with mental illness and substance use disorders want to quit and can quit, tobacco treatment may not always be considered a priority in mental health treatment settings. To help reduce smoking among individuals with mental illness, mental health providers and facilities can:

- Ask about patients’ tobacco use, advise them to quit, assess willingness to quit, assist them with accessing effective tobacco treatment, and arrange for follow up
- Integrate tobacco treatment into overall mental health treatment strategies
- Refer patients to an evidence-based tobacco treatment resource for extra support, such as the Indiana Tobacco Quitline – 1-800-Quit-Now.
- Implement tobacco-free campus policies in treatment facilities
- Stop practices that encourage tobacco use, such as allowing smoking as a reward

Resources for Quitting Tobacco Use

Quitting tobacco use can greatly improve the health and quality of life of people with mental illness. Tobacco users should contact a health care provider for assistance and call 1-800-Quit-Now or visit www.QuitNowIndiana.com for free, evidence-based support, advice and resources.