



Pennsylvania Behavioral Health and Aging Coalition  
Opening Doors for Older Pennsylvanians

## News You Can Use...

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August 20, 2010

### **First Email Newsletter!**

This is the first email newsletter from PBHAC. We hope you will find them to be a useful digest of news relating to the behavioral health needs of older adults. Please feel free to contact us if you have any questions or suggestions for future topics.

### **Suicide Prevention Awareness Event**

Join us in raising awareness of the need for Suicide Prevention at the Pennsylvania Capitol on September 21. A press conference will be held from 10:30 am– 11:30 am. Speakers will include several legislators and individuals representing veterans, students, family member survivors, and those who have attempted suicide. An empty shoe memorial will pay visual tribute to loved ones lost due to suicide and display tables will provide organizations with an opportunity to share suicide prevention materials. Representatives from various organizations will be at display tables to share information from 10:00 am – 3:00 pm. More information is available at [www.olderPA.org](http://www.olderPA.org)

### **Aging America**

The population age 65+ reached 38.9 million in 2008, representing one out of every eight Americans. Older women (22.4 million) outnumber older men (16.5 million) and are more likely to live alone (8.3 million women vs. 2.9 million men). In fact 50% of women age 75 and over live alone. The older population will continue to grow, with the number of Americans ages 45-64 who will reach age 65 over the next 20 years increasing by 31% during this decade.

Source: A Profile of Older Americans: 2009, Administration on Aging, U.S., Department of Health and Human Services, January 2010

The full report is available at

[http://www.aoa.gov/AoAroot/Aging\\_Statistics/Profile/2009/docs/2009profile\\_508.pdf](http://www.aoa.gov/AoAroot/Aging_Statistics/Profile/2009/docs/2009profile_508.pdf)



## **SAMHSA Study Reveals Dramatic Increase in Older Americans Admitted for Substance Abuse Treatment**

A recent study sponsored by the HHS Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) reveals that between 1992 and 2008 the proportion of substance abuse treatment admissions involving older Americans (aged 50 and older) nearly doubled — from 6.6 percent of all admissions in 1992 to 12.2 percent in 2008. The study also showed a sharp rise during this period in the proportion of older Americans' admissions related to illicit drug abuse — even though alcohol abuse is still the leading cause for admissions involving this age group.

In addition, while the study showed that more than three-quarters of all older American treatment admissions initiated use of their primary substance by the age of 25, an increasing proportion of admissions involved substances that had only been initiated within five years prior to admission. In 2008, cocaine abuse was the leading primary cause of admissions involving substances initiated in the past five years (26.2 percent) among older Americans, with prescription drug misuse a close second (25.8 percent).

Source: SHIP Navigator E-newsletter. A copy of the full report is available at <http://oas.samhsa.gov/2k10/229/229OlderAdms2k10.cfm>

## **Family Caregivers: Enlisting the Help of Other Informal Caregivers**

Both caregivers and care recipients in the 2009 Caregiving in the U.S. study are on average older than those in the previous 2004 study. Family caregivers were more likely to report that other unpaid caregivers were providing assistance as well (68% in 2009 as compared to 59% in 2004), while they were less likely to report the use of paid help, which declined from 41% in 2004 to 35% in 2009.

Source: Caregiving in the U.S.: Executive Summary Research Briefings, National Alliance for Caregiving in collaboration with AARP, Funded by the MetLife Foundation, November 2009

The full report is available at <http://www.caregiving.org/data/CaregivingUSAllAgesExecSum.pdf>

## **Peer Support Coalition Launches Website**

The Pennsylvania Peer Support Coalition has launched its website [www.PAPeerSupportCoalition.org](http://www.PAPeerSupportCoalition.org). The Peer Support Coalition is a statewide network of people who use their own mental health recovery experiences to support others. Coalition members are people who use peer support skills to inspire hope that recovery from mental illness is possible.



## Many Older Adults with Mental Health Problems Do Not Believe They Need Help

Mental health problems, including alcohol and substance abuse, are common in older adults. Yet only half of these individuals actively seek treatment and use mental health services. A new study has found that many older adults with mental health problems don't feel the need for treatment. Those who do perceive the need for care tend to have more symptoms of depression and other chronic health conditions.

The researchers collected data from a national sample of 1,339 individuals 65 years of age and older living in the community. Their ethnicity and gender matched that found in the general population. When a person was identified as receiving mental health care in the past 12 months, they were asked if they sought out the care voluntarily. Those who had not sought out care were asked if they felt a need to seek out treatment for an emotional or substance abuse issue. The researchers determined the prevalence and severity of depression, anxiety, and alcohol abuse in the sample. Participants were also asked if they had certain health conditions to determine the levels of physical health and cognitive functioning.

Only 7.3 percent of the entire sample perceived a need for mental health care during the past year. Among those who did feel a need, 82.8 percent received services voluntarily from either a primary care or mental health specialist. Another 17.2 percent perceived a need for mental health care but did not receive care. Those older adults most likely to feel a need for care tended to have more severe mental illness. They also had histories of depression, anxiety, chronic physical illness, and alcohol abuse. Perceived need for care was less likely as age increased. Men were half as likely as women to report perceived need for care. The study was supported in part by the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (T32 HS00036).

Source: "Perceived need for mental health care among community-dwelling older adults," by Melissa M. Garrido, Ph.D., Robert L. Kane, M.D., Merrie Kaas, D.N.Sc., R.N., C.S., and Rosalie A. Kane, Ph.D., in the November 2009 *Journal of Gerontology: Psychological Sciences* 64(6), pp. 704-712.

## Get on Board with National Depression Screening Day

Screening for Mental Health invites you to celebrate National Depression Screening Day on Oct. 7. Your organization can register for a screening kit and host an event. Especially designed for older adults is the Feel Good Bingo—Older Adult kit, a game that teaches seniors about mental health.

Source: Screening for Mental Health  
<http://www.mentalhealthscreening.org/events/ndsd/index.aspx>



## **UPMC Offers Alzheimer's Disease Update Training**

This program will provide information about Alzheimer's disease (AD) diagnosis and management as well as current advances in AD research. More information is available at <http://www.wpic.pitt.edu/oerp/Regional/R714FlyerWeb.htm>

## **Webinar: How to Educate Seniors on Health Reform**

Are you getting questions from seniors about health reform? Learn how to answer them at a free Webinar on the National Council on Aging's Straight Talk for Seniors campaign. Discover how to use consumer-tested fact sheets and online interactive quiz to help older adults understand the new law. Webinars are scheduled for Aug. 26 and Sept. 1.

Source: National Council on Aging <http://www.ncoa.org/calendar-of-events/how-to-give-seniors-straight.html>

Previous copies of PBHAC's News You Can Use are available on the website at [www.olderPA.org/newsletter](http://www.olderPA.org/newsletter)

