Brain Injury and Mental Health

Tennessee Brighter Futures

Children and adults can experience Mental Health challenges following brain injuries. These challenges range from anxiety and depression to personality changes and psychotic disorders.

One Third → **6 months to 1 year following an injury: one third will experience a mental health problem – that number will grow over time.**

2 - 4 Times → **People with Brain Injury have a 2-4 times increased risk of attempting or having death by suicide.**

75% → **As high as 75% of people seeking mental health and substance use treatment also have a brain injury.**

BEST PRACTICE

The Mental Health System should:

- **SCREEN** for prior history of Brain Injury
- **ASSESS** Cognitive & Functional Impairment
- **EDUCATE** staff on Brain Injury
- **EDUCATE** the person about their Brain Injury
- **PROVIDE** and **TEACH** Accommodations
- **CONNECT** person served with Community Resources

COMMON PROBLEMS

After Brain Injury, we often see problems with:

- Attention, memory and new learning
- Slowed speed of processing
- Organization, problem solving & impulsivity
- Irritability, frustration & agitation
- Balance, dizziness & headaches
- Poor awareness of deficits & difficulties
- Difficulty being flexible, poor self-monitoring

988 National Suicide and Crisis Lifeline

WHAT TO LOOK FOR

Mental Health personnel may see:

- Looking uninterested because they cannot pay attention
- Appearance of defiance because they cannot remember the rules
- Slow to follow directions because they cannot process quickly
- Getting into fights because of irritability, anger and impulsivity
- Falling into things, often getting hurt
- Difficulty engaging in the community because of cognitive changes
- Gets stuck on an idea or a way of doing something, does not recognize mistakes

"Mental illness is no one's fault. For many people, recovery - including meaningful roles in social life, school and work - is possible, especially when treatment begins early and the person plays a role in their own recovery process." - NAMI

Common Accommodations for Brain Injury Challenges

Here are some common and simple accommodations:

- **Working for shorter periods of time**
- **Getting rid of distractions around you, like noise or movement**
- **Taking notes (on paper, in a notebook, on a phone or computer)**
- **Using a phone to set timers to remember appointments**
- **Repeating information to the person**
- **Slowing down when talking; giving them more time to respond**
- **Giving the person a list of house rules, written directions, or pictures to help them understand and remember**
- **Coaching the person with the injury to "Stop, think and plan" then act**
- **Coaching the person to take deep breaths when feeling angry or anxious**

Tools for Best Practice

Brain Links' Strategies & Accommodations Tool: https://www.tndisability.org/rehabilitation
Symptom Questionnaire: https://mindsourcecolorado.org/adult-symptom-questionnaire/
Cognitive Strategies Guidebook: https://mindsourcecolorado.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/Strategies-and-Accommodations-Guidebook-CJ-Professionals-5.6.19.pdf
Brain Injury Screening Resources:

- **OSU TBI Identification Method:** https://wexnermedical.osu.edu/neurological-institute/neuroscience-research-institute/research-centers/ohio-valley-center-for-brain-injury-prevention-and-rehabilitation/osu-tbi-id
- **NASHIA's OBISSS:** https://www.nashia.org/obisssprogram

Tennessee Resources

Brain Links' Website with many resources: tndisability.org/brain

Brain Links' Toolkits (for Service Professionals and Survivors): https://www.tndisability.org/brain-toolkits

TN Department of Health TBI Program: https://tinyurl.com/3v5jrdt3

Tennessee Brighter Futures' Resource Pages & Training for Brain Injury: https://www.tndisability.org/tbf-brain-injury

Resource Pages & Training for Mental Health https://www.tndisability.org/tbf-mental-health

TN Brighter Futures is organized and facilitated by Brain Links through a contract from the TN Department of Health TBI Program.

Mental Health Resources

References:

- National Alliance on Mental Health (NAMI), nami.org.
- Administration for Community Living Behavioral Health Guide: Considerations for Best Practices for Children, Youth and Adults with Traumatic Brain Injury. May 2022.
- Corrigan, JD and Dettmer, JL. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. (2021). Treating Clients with Traumatic Brain Injury (Updated). Advisory.

Brain Links
https://www.tndisability.org/brain
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