

***Co-occurring Issues – Tackling Substance Abuse and Mental Health Disorders***

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(Green Bay, Wis.) – Co-occurring substance abuse problems and mental health issues are more common than most people think. During this National Mental Health Awareness Month, the [Jackie Nitschke Center](http://www.jackienitschkecenter.org/) wants people to know that the dual diagnoses can be tackled at the same time by using the right programs.

“Nearly half of the people with severe mental disorders are affected by substance abuse in some way,” said Tina Baeten, Clinical Supervisor at the Jackie Nitschke Center. “It’s important to understand that there are ways to address those mental health issues while also working on the road to recovery from addiction.”

Substance abuse and mental health disorders such as anxiety and depression are closely linked, although there’s little to indicate that one causes the other. Of course, the abuse of substances such as marijuana or methamphetamine can create psychotic episodes and can also worsen depression or anxiety.

“It can be challenging to identify and treat a dual diagnosis,” Baeten explained. “Signs and symptoms can vary depending on the mental health challenge and the type of substance abuse involved.” The Jackie Nitschke Center is the only area treatment center with staff that are certified in the treatment of co-occurring diagnosis.

While difficult to diagnose, there are warning signs of a co-occurring disorder, including:

* Drugs or alcohol being used to cope with bad memories or feelings, to control pain or to stay focused.
* A family history that includes struggles with mental health issues or substance addiction.
* Anxiety or depression when sober.
* Failed treatment for drug or alcohol addiction due to difficulties from a mental health challenge.

“What’s most important is to seek help and to be open and honest about the challenges you’re having,” added Baeten. “Often clients don’t realize they have co-occurring medical issues. They just know something is wrong and they need help. We can help sort through things and get them on the path to recovery.

More information about the services provided by the Jackie Nitschke Center is available at [www.jackienitschkecenter.org](http://www.jackienitschkecenter.org/).

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