

## White House Office on National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP)

### IMPACT OF TRAUMA

Victims of trauma often self-medicate with alcohol or other drugs, rather than seeking proper medical attention. Furthermore, women who experience trauma are more likely to experience mental health and substance abuse problems. Because addiction is a disease of the brain, it is critical to address trauma and its psychological aftereffects. The Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP) recognizes that women trauma survivors may feel inhibited from sharing their experiences in group therapy sessions with men, or may be re-traumatized in such intimate settings. In response, ONDCP is focusing on expanding access to gender-responsive treatment and recovery services. Additional statistics on women and addiction, information about the impact of trauma, and sources for further information can be found in the first Federal Partners Report on Women and Trauma <http://nicic.gov/Library/025082>.

### How a Trauma-Informed Approach Can Make a Difference

Given the significant correlation between lifetime history of drug and alcohol-facilitated rape, posttraumatic stress disorder, and nonmedical use of prescription drugs, medical professionals working with these populations should be aware of the importance of screening for drug abuse to avoid further health and safety issues. Treatment providers should also be aware of this connection and seek to address the underlying traumatic experiences that have led their patients to abuse substances. By addressing the underlying causes of substance abuse, treatment providers may experience greater successes in sustained recovery for their clients.



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### Major Accomplishments 2010-2013

The President's National Drug Control Strategy calls for evidence-based treatment for substance use disorders for all people, including those with co-occurring substance use and mental health disorders. The Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP) is working to expand access to treatment for substance use disorders at the Federal and state levels, including identifying specialty treatment modalities that can be expanded. Additionally, ONDCP has worked with its partners at the Departments of Justice and Health and Human Services to ensure access to care for women, and supports partner agencies in their efforts to reach more people with appropriate care, including trauma-informed treatment.

### New Directions and Collaborations

ONDCP encourages the advancement of research on the nexus between substance abuse and mental health, including the effects of trauma on the brain. As further research on the effect of trauma on women and substance abuse is developed, ONDCP will continue to advocate for the provision of trauma-informed care and urge substance abuse treatment providers to adopt the latest evidence-based approaches.

### Additional Resources

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<http://www.whitehouse.gov/ondcp>

McCauley, J.A., Amstadter, A., Danielson, C., Ruggiero, K., Kilpatrick, D., and Resnick, H. (2009) Mental Health and Rape History in Relation to Non-Medical Use of Prescription Drugs in a National Sample of Women, *Addictive Behaviors*, 34: 641-648.