

## **Gatekeeper Older Adult Training Outline**

### **Welcome**

### **Introductions**

### **Purpose of the training**

Living Well As We Get Older! Being mentally healthy and happy as we get older is something that everyone deserves and can achieve. It is important that we as gatekeepers discover new and healthy pathways that help older adults maintain and renew their -- mental and physical health. Feeling depressed or anxious is not normal at any age. Our society has the mistaken belief that as we get older and with the onset of other medical difficulties – sadness and nervousness are normal responses. As we age, illness and trauma can manifest itself in many ways – mentally and physically. Even something as serious as delusions or hallucinations can be caused by something as simple as a urinary tract infection. As we age our nutrition, physical activity, ability to relax, how we think about situations, medications we take, alcohol we may drink, and almost everything we do will impact how we feel. It is important for older adults to find healthcare providers that specialize or are at least knowledgeable about aging issues related to health. Mental wellness is happiness, peace of mind, enjoyment and satisfaction in life.

Substance Abuse Problems Set to Increase Due to Aging Baby Boomers: Although experts warn that society should expect an increase in the number of older adults who have prescription drug abuse problems as the “baby boomer” generation ages, they also note that there will also be an increase in illicit drug abuse among older adults as well. Of the roughly 383,000 emergency room admissions for cocaine abuse in 2004, about 10,800 were made by people between 55 and 64, and about 1,500 were made by people older than 65. “We are beginning to see an increase in heroin and cocaine addiction at the front-end of the baby boom wave,” said an executive at a treatment program in West Palm Beach, Fla. One federal report estimates that the number of older adults who abuse any substance will double between 1999 and 2020, from 2.5 million to 5 million. ([Reuters](#), 5/17/06)

The *Aging Well: Helping Older Adults Navigate Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services* training guide will assist providers in further understanding the older

adult population and ways in which to provide the best possible care to this growing population. This includes:

- Resources available to assist in making outside referrals to mental health and substance abuse services for older adults.
- Commonly held myths about mental health and substance abuse issues and the older adult populations and the truths.
- Current research, data, and information regarding mental health and substance abuse issues among the older adult population.

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**PLEASE NOTE:** Any and all materials within this guide are reproducible for educational and research purposes. If you would like additional kits or to find out how to get involved in an older adult initiative in your area, please contact the Mental Health America at (859) 431-1077 or look for resources at [www.guidetofeelingbetter.org](http://www.guidetofeelingbetter.org)