

APA Official Actions

Position Statement on Substance Use Disorders in Older Adults

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Issue: Substance use disorders (SUDs) are epidemic among older adults. SUDs in this population are often unrecognized and/or inadequately treated, leading to significant adverse health consequences, including exacerbation of underlying medical and psychiatric conditions, confusion, worsening cognitive functioning, falls, and death from drug overdoses. Psychosocial problems and involvement with the legal system may also occur. Clinicians need to be aware that older adults may experience harm from substances at lower levels of consumption than do younger adults for various reasons, including medical and psychiatric comorbidities, medication burden, and drug-drug interactions. These factors may lead to increased emergency room visits, hospitalizations, and healthcare costs.

It is the position of the APA that:

- **A well-trained workforce of psychiatrists and other mental health clinicians is needed to address the unmet clinical needs of older adults with SUDs and reduce the poor outcomes and deaths related to these disorders.**
- **Evidence-based integrated care models are needed to treat older adults with SUDs.**

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