

## **Adults with Serious Substance Abuse, Mental Health, & Community Living Problems**

**Members of this Cluster have serious life problems resulting from a combination of their abuse of or dependence upon drugs and/or alcohol, their serious mental health problems, and their poor community living skills. While they typically don't acknowledge the fact, their substance abuse interferes greatly in their lives, and they spend much of their time thinking about or engaging in drug seeking behavior.** Psychiatric symptoms such as hallucinations, delusions, anxiety, and depression also typically make their lives very difficult. Some Cluster members may also be suffering from the effects of past traumatic experiences such as abuse, military service, or other violence.

**Many Cluster members also have difficulty expressing anger in appropriate ways.** They will choose the wrong person, the wrong situation, or show too much anger. They are impulsive and often seek short-term gratification rather than looking at the longer-term effects of their actions. Their frequent drug seeking activities often place them in dangerous situations and involve them in criminal activities. Cluster members often get "picked up" for illegal possession of drugs, DWI, breaking and entering, family violence, or threatening others. They also may have been repeatedly admitted to and discharged from substance abuse or mental health treatment facilities.

**Members of this Cluster tend to have an overwhelming sense of hopelessness and helplessness about their lives.** The combination of their mental health and substance abuse problems, their long-standing poverty, and their inability to meet their own personal needs has frequently made it difficult for them to seriously engage in the recovery process. In addition they are often victims of stigma brought about by their own appearance and/or behavior in the community. Consequently, some seem not to care, give up easily, and often do not follow through with planned activities. Others appear to feel "entitled" to the services and opportunities they receive.

**The members of this Cluster have great difficulty functioning consistently in the community.** They have difficulty managing their time, keeping appointments and doing things they need to accomplish in their daily lives. Most are unable to manage their own money and have poor daily living skills. They have lost their public benefits because they failed to fulfill requirements for re-determination, didn't provide proper documentation, or waited until a check didn't come before taking action.

**Cluster members are frequently in crisis and may try to manipulate, misrepresent their situation, or lie to others to get their needs met.** For example, they may spend all their money on drugs and then ask others for money for food, shelter, housing, or other basic needs. They make demands on others and tend to "burn their bridges" behind them. When they "sober up" they may express regrets about what they have done; however these feelings tend to be superficial and short-lived. Consequently, therapeutic support from families and friends is very limited for these individuals.

**Unmet health care needs are a problem for many of the people in this Cluster.** Some have needs for general health care, while others have Hepatitis, Tuberculosis or Sexually Transmitted Diseases resulting from their substance abuse and life circumstances. Many also have other chronic physical or oral health conditions that require special attention. Poor hygiene and poor nutrition compound these health difficulties.

**Many Cluster members have had a negative attitude toward the use of psychotropic medications.** Some may know the purpose and side effects of their medications and others do not. They typically have significant problems acquiring, storing, and taking their medications. Some Cluster members have been told that recovery requires that they must abstain from all substances. Others deny their psychiatric problems and don't see the need for medication. Some use psychotropic medications as "drugs." Others refuse them in order to avoid side effects or the stigma of taking these medications.

**Many Cluster members lack stable housing.** Most have lived alone, or with their family or family of choice. Others have lived with roommates. However, their living status is quite precarious. They often live in dangerous circumstances. They are victims of violence (if others think they have drugs or money) or can, themselves, hurt others in order to obtain drugs. Some turn to prostitution to support themselves and their habit. They have frequently been evicted from their housing, and many are chronically homeless, living in shelters or on the streets. Most resist placement in supervised living arrangements.

**The vast majority of Cluster members are neither working nor in any type of vocational or educational training.** Work is stressful for many Cluster members and they are unprepared for what is expected of them. When Cluster members have worked, they often have spent their earnings on drugs, which may have led to a worsening of their psychiatric symptoms and caused them to lose their housing. Supported Employment services are often needed for Cluster members to succeed in work settings.

**While members of this Cluster have lived very difficult and challenging lives, they have been survivors.** They are resourceful in finding ways to live even if their quality of life has been poor. They are aware of community resources even if they have not always used them appropriately. Some also have family members or individuals in their family of choice who continue to care about them. These individuals may be willing to support their efforts to engage in a recovery process. In general, members of this Cluster keep coming back to treatment even when things did not work out in the past.