

NEWSLETTER



You are a former New York City Police Department officer. When you were a new officer serving the community, what was your understanding of opioid addiction and medication-assisted treatment (MAT), and how has your understanding evolved?

When I first became a New York City police officer, I had little to no understanding of substance use disorders or how to identify or interact with individuals who had a substance use disorder. Our training mainly focused on policing in diverse communities and dealing with people who had emotional disturbances. My understanding of MAT was even more limited. For example, a fellow officer might point out a person they thought looked like they were on methadone. We would see people standing on the street, and officers would make comments such as, "They're the walking dead." In the academy, there was a lot of emphasis and education about the crack epidemic of the 1980s and early 1990s. However, our training was simply to be as cautious as possible when dealing with people with substance use disorders because they're unpredictable.

Since my tenure as an officer and throughout my recovery journey, I have come to understand that people with substance use disorders come in all shapes and sizes. I look back at my time as a police officer and wish that I could have been more understanding and empathetic to people suffering from addiction. I can sadly admit that I looked down upon them but was in immense denial that I was, in fact, one of them. Once I grasped addiction as a disease, I realized that just like any other ailment, treatment is an option and is necessary. I have explored and researched MAT. I understand that what worked for me may not necessarily work for another, so it is important to have an open mind. I have also come to see that MAT is most effective when it is used alongside treatment services, such as individualized therapy, intensive inpatient and outpatient services, and 12-step or self-help groups.

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Promoting Access to Justice through Trauma-Informed Courts

By Sarai Cook, Esq., Servant Leader, National Trauma Awareness Initiative

Trauma Is a Courtroom Issue

Trauma is understood to be the long-term consequences of an event or events that were physically or emotionally harmful to an individual. Substance use, mental health disorders, and trauma have high rates of comorbidity across general populations. This high correlation between substance use, mental health disorders, and lifetime trauma exposure is even stronger among individuals who are justice involved. The prevalence of trauma exposure among individuals who are justice involved is evidenced in an unpublished study funded by the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation's Research Network on Mandated Community Treatment. Researchers surveyed 311 mental health court participants and found that 67 percent of women and 73 percent of men reported experiencing physical abuse as a child; 70 percent of women and 25 percent of men reported experiencing sexual abuse or rape before the age of 20.

Merely being entangled in the court system can signal trauma exposure. For example, many behaviors that have been deemed criminal are also adaptive behaviors that some court participants are using to survive, from drug use and theft to trespass and sex work. These activities, along with justice involvement, increase the likelihood of trauma exposure. Unfortunately, justice for trauma-exposed individuals can be challenging to come by in many courtrooms across the country. Furthermore, trauma survivors may not be aware of the impact trauma has had on their lives or they may not want to disclose their trauma history to the courts. Thus, rather than setting criteria or requiring disclosure, courts can promote access to justice for all individuals coming through the courtroom by taking a "universal assumption of trauma" approach and utilizing trauma-informed practices for all cases. As stated in SAMHSA's concept of trauma,

"A program, organization, or system that is trauma-informed realizes the widespread impact of trauma and understands potential paths for recovery; recognizes the signs and symptoms of trauma in clients, families, staff, and others involved with the system; and responds by fully integrating knowledge about trauma into policies, procedures, and practices, and seeks to actively resist re-traumatization."

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More than Books: New Jersey Libraries Provide a Fresh Start for Returning Citizens

In New Jersey and Philadelphia County, Pennsylvania, people returning from incarceration have a special advocate in their community—their local public library. Fresh Start @ Your Library is a New Jersey State Library program offered in partnership with the New Jersey State Parole Board, the Long Branch Free Public Library, the Free Library of Philadelphia, and the New Jersey State Department of Labor & Workforce Development. The program is funded by a National Leadership Grant from the Institute of Museum and Library Services. The 2-year grant runs through August 31, 2021, but the Fresh Start @ Your Library program had modest beginnings in 2009, prior to receiving the grant. Fresh Start @ Your Library began when Long Branch Free Public Library Director Tonya Garcia saw many of her community members, including family members, returning to prison because of a lack of opportunities for work and housing when they came home.

Garcia began leading group workshops for formerly incarcerated individuals that taught computer, job search, and resume writing skills. But she found that formerly incarcerated individuals did not want to be seen joining a group session that was clearly labeled for people who had been in prison. She moved to one-on-one sessions to preserve the anonymity of the individual so that nobody would know why they were meeting with a librarian. In addition, Garcia secured the resources to hire a social worker to help assess the patron's needs.

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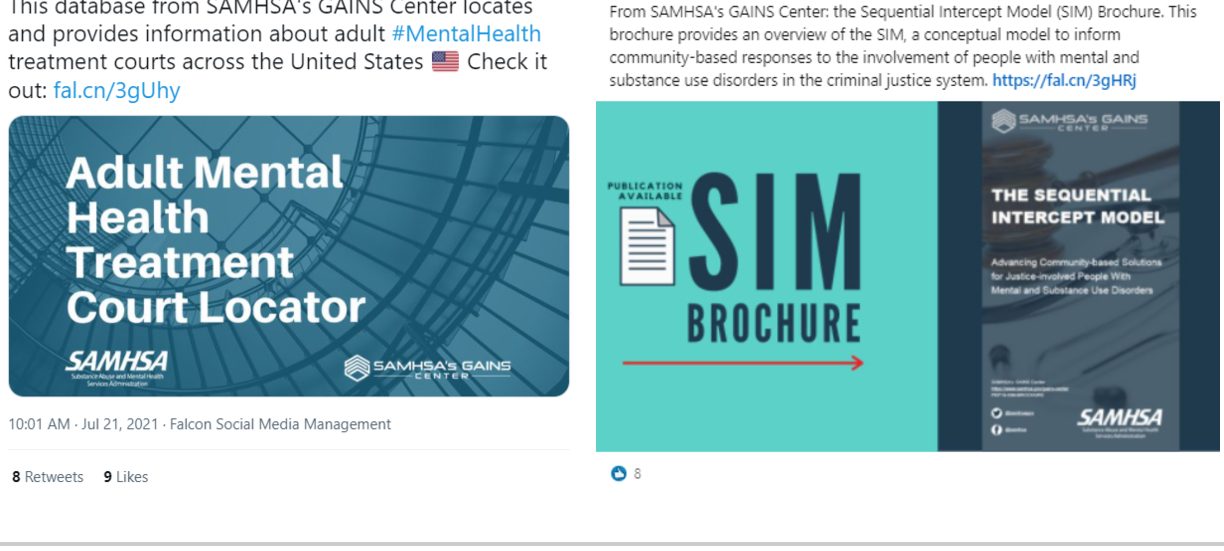
Webinar Archives Available

SAMHSA's GAINS Center is pleased to announce that recordings from past webinars are now available for on-demand viewing. View the following uploads on SAMHSA's YouTube channel:

- [Fostering Partnerships and Collaborations across the Sequential Intercept Model \(SIM\)](#) (April 30, 2020)
- [Implementing a Peer Mentor Program: Strategies for Engaging Peer Recovery Support Specialists in Adult Treatment Courts](#) (August 31, 2020)
- [Self-Care for Criminal Justice Professionals across the SIM: Considerations for Intercepts 0-2](#) (December 17, 2020)
- [Supporting Peers Providing Services at Intercept 0](#) (February 22, 2021)
- [Supporting Peers Providing Services at Intercept 0](#) (February 25, 2021)
- [From Siloes to Collaboration: Linking Health Care, Public Safety, and Behavioral Health Part 1](#) (April 29, 2021)

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Resource Spotlight

- [Mental Health Identification Practices of Jails: The Unmet Needs of the "Silent" Population](#)
- [New Resource Guide for Justice System on Substance Use Disorders Released](#)
- [Tailoring Services in Opioid Treatment Programs for Patients Involved in America's Criminal Justice System: National Associations and Variation by State and Medicaid Expansion Status](#)

