

## Pennsylvania Department of Health



### Brain Injury and Opioids Initiative

The Brain Injury and Opioids Initiative is a partnership between the PA Department of Health and the Brain Injury Association of PA to work with providers to support Pennsylvanians.

**Opioid misuse has many unwanted consequences, including an intersection with brain injury.**

***Opioid use disorder increases the risk for brain injury.*** Those who misuse opioids or survive an overdose can experience brain damage because of lack of oxygen to the brain.<sup>1</sup> They are also more susceptible to brain injuries caused by falls and violence.

***Growing evidence suggests that individuals with brain injuries may be uniquely susceptible to opioid use disorder.*** This finding is because of chronic pain, substance use, neurobehavioral challenges, medication mismanagement, and difficulty accessing effective treatment.<sup>2</sup>

***Brain injury makes the likelihood of success in substance use treatment less likely.*** Brain injury affects an individual's ability to concentrate, remember, plan, problem-solve, and self-regulate and therefore reduces the likelihood of treatment success. Those with history of brain injury need adaptations to their treatment as well as long-term support to succeed. They also benefit from being connected to specialized brain injury services and resources.<sup>3</sup>

### **This initiative:**

- Provides training to providers and professionals who work with individuals with substance use disorder, brain injury, or both.
- Offers assistance to providers who want to develop their ability to identify, treat, and refer individuals with both brain injury and substance use disorder.

### **Initiative contact information:**

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<sup>1</sup>Corrigan, J. & Sayko Adams, R. (2019). The intersection of lifetime history of traumatic brain injury and the opioid crisis. *Addictive Behaviors*; 90: 143-145.

<sup>2</sup>Adams, R. S., Corrigan, J. D., & Dams-O'Connor, K. (2020). Opioid use among individuals with traumatic brain injury: a perfect storm?. *Journal of Neurotrauma*, 37(1), 211-216.

<sup>3</sup>Lorenz, L. and Doonan, M. (2019). A Policy Analysis of Access to Post-Acute Rehabilitation Services for People with Acquired Brain Injury in Massachusetts and Beyond. Massachusetts Health Policy Forum Issue Brief.



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