



NORTH CAROLINA ENGAGEMENT CENTER: ADULT CO-OCCURRING BIPOLAR AND ALCOHOL USE SCREENING AND STABILIZATION

The Beacon Health Options North Carolina Engagement Center (NCEC) implemented the Adult Co-Occurring Bipolar and Alcohol Use Screening and Stabilization Program in 2015. This program focuses on highly recidivistic members with a single primary diagnosis of bipolar disorder or alcohol use disorder and a history of one or more readmissions to an inpatient or residential treatment facility within 30 days of discharge.

The impact of alcohol use disorders on persons with a bipolar disorder can be significant and result in poorer outcomes. According to National Institute of Health article, "Bipolar Disorder and Alcohol Use Disorder: A Review" reported that a dual diagnosis of bipolar and alcohol use disorder resulted in a longer duration to withdrawal from alcohol, increased severity of manic and depressive symptoms, increased suicide risk, poorer prognosis, higher cost, increased morbidity, overall decreased degree of functioning and increased associated psychopathology.

- About three percent of the population is affected by bipolar disorder. However, increased awareness of the bipolar spectrum disorder will likely increase this percentage overtime.
- Alcohol use disorder can affect about 13 percent of the general population with a lifetime incidence of 18 percent.
- The co-morbidity of both disorders combined can reach up to 45 percent of that population. Thus together, the co-morbidity of alcohol use disorder and bipolar disorder represents a large segment of the population.

Alcohol is the most commonly abused substance among individuals with bipolar disorder. They are more than three times as likely as those in the general population to have alcohol or dependence. This instability can interfere with recovery, making it difficult to comply with treatment guidelines or an individualized integrated treatment plan. Screening is needed to identify those individuals at risk. The NCEC Co-Occurring Bipolar and Alcohol Use Screening Program will identify those members and will assist with education, support and treatment needs.

[References](#)

Conor K Farren, Ph.D., Kevin P Hill, MD, and Roger D Weiss, MD. *Bipolar Disorder and Alcohol Use Disorder: A Review*. National Institute of Health. Current Psychiatry Rep. 2012 Dec; 14(6): 659–666.