



# Mental Health and People Living with HIV/AIDS

in the Boston Eligible Metropolitan Area



In 2009, JSI Research and Training Institute (JSI) conducted a comprehensive service needs assessment of people living with HIV/AIDS (PLWH) for the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (MDPH) Office of HIV/AIDS and the Boston Public Health Commission (BPHC) HIV/AIDS Services Division. The study was based on a two-phase survey that included a broad range of questions to assess the need for and barriers to services, experiences living with HIV/AIDS, quality of life, stigma, and self-sufficiency.

## SIGNIFICANT FINDINGS

47% of PLWH reported a recent mental health diagnosis; among this group, the top two most **common mental health diagnoses** were depression (84%) and anxiety (62%).

Compared to those without a recent diagnosis, more PLWH with a recent mental health diagnosis reported:

- Concerns about **growing older** with HIV. Top concerns were staying healthy and quality of life.
- Experiencing **stigma** for 11 of 12 stigma factors assessed. The most common stigma experiences were related to disclosure concerns.
- Living with one or more **disabilities**, an **AIDS diagnosis**, **fair/poor health status**, and a **higher viral load**.
- Experiencing **problems with medication adherence**.
- Having **needed and used** 7 of 19 HIV-related medical and support services assessed.
- That someone had **talked with them about mental health issues and substance use** in the prior six months.
- Living with **Hepatitis C**.

### Dually Diagnosed

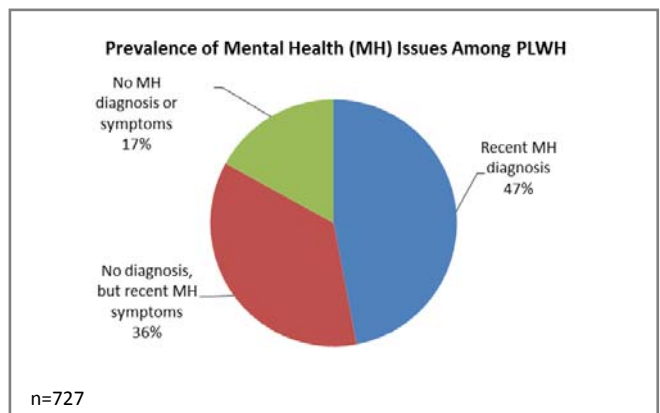
Nearly 10% of respondents were diagnosed with a recent mental health and substance abuse condition. Of the dually diagnosed:

- 20% reported an **unmet need for substance abuse services**, and 44% reported experiencing a **barrier** to accessing such services.
- Over 40% reported **problems with housing**.

A total of 5,060 Phase I surveys were distributed and 1,791 were completed and returned; 1,339 lived within the Boston EMA. Of the 1,791 who completed the Phase I survey, 1,528 volunteered to take the longer, Phase II survey, and 1,066 were completed and returned; 763 of lived in the Boston EMA. Complete details on the survey samples, including extensive demographic data, are described in the *Massachusetts and Southern New Hampshire HIV/AIDS Consumer Study Final Report*.

Nearly one-half (47%) of survey respondents reported that they had been diagnosed with a mental health condition in the prior three months (recent mental health diagnosis). Additional analyses were conducted to identify potential differences between those with and without a recent mental health diagnosis.

This fact sheet highlights the statistically significant findings identified by the analysis (where  $p < .05$ ). A summary report of the PLWH and mental health analyses, as well as the *Massachusetts and Southern New Hampshire HIV/AIDS Consumer Study Final Report*, are available at [www.bphc.org/aids](http://www.bphc.org/aids).



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