



Kalamazoo Community Mental Health & Substance Abuse Services
2030 Portage Road
Kalamazoo MI 49001

Special Study on Crime-Reported Victimization of Consumers to be conducted, Thursday, February 5, 2015

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Kalamazoo Community Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services (KCMHSAS) will release a special study on crime-reported victimization of consumers at its Board retreat on February 5, 2015. KCMHSAS serves approximately 5,900 residents of Kalamazoo County who are people with serious mental illnesses and co-occurring substance use disorders, children with serious emotional disturbances, and people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. The study was conducted by Catherine L. Kothari, Ph.D., Assistant Professor and Director of Community Research Section, Western Michigan University Homer Stryker M.D. School of Medicine.

Research completed for the US Surgeon Generals' Report of 1999 shows that Americans have achieved greater understanding of mental illness and its causes. This increase in knowledge, however, has not diffused the social stigma surrounding people with mental illness and violence. The same Surgeon General Report shows that this stigma largely stems from the link between mental illness and violence in the minds of the general public. The relationship between violence and mental illness is complex and nuanced. The presence of a mental health problem or disability does not make a person at high risk for violence (Steadman, 1998). It is just one factor among many including; substance abuse or dependence, a history of violence, juvenile detention, or physical abuse (Elbogen and Johnson, 2009). Another study indicated that the overall contribution of mental disorders to the level of violence in society is exceptionally small (Swanson, 1994). What is clear is that a person with severe mental health problems or disabilities is far more likely to be a victim of crime rather than a perpetrator of crime.

The study that will be released by KCMHSAS found that crime-reported victimization is more than twice as high among adult consumers served compared to the Kalamazoo County adult population. Just as in the general population, consumer victims are disproportionately female and disproportionately African Americans. The study also found that consumer's victimization is more violent and more likely to be by multiple perpetrators compared to victimization among the general population. Further, the study documented the substantial health burden that crime victimization brings to consumers, who experience higher hospital emergency department visits, greater psychiatric hospitalizations, and more medical hospitalizations.

Kalamazoo Community Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services (KCMHSAS) is a Community Mental Health Services Program (CMHSP). The Access Center can help connect you with appropriate services, 24 hours a day/7 days per week. In an emergency, please call (269)373-6000 or toll free at (888)373-6200.