

Chapter 1

Introduction

This manual is designed to help treatment program personnel meet the specific needs of women with substance abuse problems. It is for substance abuse treatment staff who work in programs that serve both men and women and for staff who serve women only. Although written for a wide audience, the manual is most relevant to federally-funded programs that mainly serve low-income populations. The manual is presented in eight chapters, including this introductory chapter. Chapters 2 through 8 are presented as follows:

- **Chapter 2** “Women and Alcohol and Other Drugs: An Overview” presents a summary of the current epidemiology of substance abuse among women, and data and information concerning factors related to substance abuse among women.
 - **Chapter 3** “Treatment of Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse: An Introduction” presents approaches to the treatment of substance abuse.
 - **Chapter 4** “Outreach to and Identification of Women” presents a discussion of barriers to engaging women in treatment and outreach strategies to deal with those barriers.
 - **Chapter 5** “Comprehensive Treatment for Women” presents approaches to comprehensive care in each stage of the treatment process (e.g., intake, treatment, discharge).
 - **Chapter 6** “Continuing Care and Follow Up” is a summary of approaches to continuing care.
 - **Chapter 7** “Program Management Issues” presents an overview of program management issues.
 - **Chapter 8** “Reflections” includes thoughts and reflections on the issues raised in the manual.
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Unless otherwise stated, the discussion of treatment issues and strategies relates to women in substance abuse treatment in general; that is, the information applies across ethnic/racial groups and socioeconomic groups. Factors specifically related to different populations of women (age groups, ethnic/racial groups, and other populations) are addressed in chapters 2, 4, and 5. For example, in chapter 2, comparative information is presented by age and/or race where appropriate, but information regarding several populations is also summarized at the end of the chapter. Because of the critical importance of the cultural competency of staff in engaging and retaining women in treatment and the importance of the factors of culture, gender, and class in designing and delivering effective substance abuse treatment services, extensive discussions of issues unique to different population groups are presented in chapters 4 and 5. Those who are knowledgeable about the current epidemiology of substance abuse in women may wish to refer directly to chapters that present specific strategies concerning one of the phases of care (e.g., outreach, continuing care). Others may choose to read chapter 2 thoroughly before reading the other chapters or may wish to use chapter 2 as a quick reference for epidemiologic information.

There is no large body of research on which to base the design and implementation of strategies for women's substance abuse treatment, as chapter 2 will make clear, and many of the national data sets that might be useful do not have—or do not present—information separately for men and women. Those who manage treatment services for women or who are counselors in women's treatment programs do describe their programs and conduct at least informal assessments in the course of program management (e.g., completing required reports for funding or sponsoring agencies) and fund raising (e.g., preparing proposals). However, program managers often do not have the resources or the opportunity to conduct systematic evaluations or assessments of their programs or to compare their services with those of other treatment programs. Thus, program staff usually rely on

experiential knowledge or the “oral tradition” in designing, developing, and implementing substance abuse treatment services for women.

This manual is based on the knowledge of experts in the field of substance abuse treatment for women as well as on published and unpublished research. Both of these information sources contribute to the knowledge base of substance abuse treatment. The compilation and presentation of the information in this manual serves as a guide to develop and implement effective substance abuse treatment services for women. This manual also serves as a guidepost for research by helping to make evident the gaps in current knowledge. As this process continues, it will provide relevant and current information to help those in the field of substance abuse treatment implement effective substance abuse treatment services for women.

Across all program components in the continuum of care for women, the mandate of providers is to do the following:

- Engender hope and empowerment in their clients,
 - Ensure safe, secure, and supportive environments,
 - Establish trusting relationships between women clients and staff,
 - Provide advocacy in accessing all services needed,
 - Promote self responsibility, self sufficiency, and interdependence,
 - Strive for gender specific and culturally relevant client-driven services,
 - Eliminate labeling of women and their children in all respects, and
 - Build the effective linkages and networking required for model women’s programs.
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Chapter 2

Women and Alcohol and Other Drugs: An Overview



Photo by Larry Crowe

*The effects of alcohol
and other drug abuse
on women's health
are clear.*

