Adolescent Girls and Opioids for Adolescent SBIRT Trainees

Connecticut Opioid Misuse Prevention (COMP) Initiative
Scope of the Adolescent Opioid Problem

National Data (2016 NSDUH)

• 891,000 adolescents age 12-17 reported misusing opioids in 2016 (3.6%)
• 3.5% misused prescription drugs while .1% of adolescents age 12-17 used heroin in 2016
Scope of the Adolescent Opioid Problem

Connecticut Data – NMUPD (2015 YRBS)

• 12% of CT high school students reported ever misusing prescription drugs (vs. 16.8% nationally)
• Rates of NMUPD among CT students did not vary by gender
Scope of the Adolescent Opioid Problem

Connecticut Data – Heroin (2015 YRBS)

• 2.2% of CT high school students reported ever using heroin (vs. 2.1% nationally)
• Rates of heroin use by CT male high school students was significantly higher than CT female high school students (3.0% vs. 1.1%)
Risk Factors for Adolescent Girls

- Trauma
- Biological/Physical
- Mental/Emotional
- Social Influences
- Transitions
Adolescent Girls - Trauma

• Girls and women have an increased likelihood of violence and trauma at any point in their life span
• There is a close correlation between surviving trauma and experiencing a substance use or mental health disorder
• Trauma can have a strong and long-lasting effect on development and on the experiences of women and girls (including guilt and shame)
Adolescent Girls - Trauma

• Sexual and Physical Abuse
  - Girls experience more physical and sexual abuse than boys
  - Girls who have been sexually abused are more likely to use or misuse substances
  - Sexually abused girls use substances earlier, more often, and in greater quantities
Adolescent Girls - Trauma

• Intimate Partner Violence
  - Girls are at risk of harm from partners/lovers
  - Distress of being harmed by someone who supposedly cares for you leads to increase in mental health issues
  - Partners may pressure girls to use substances such as opioids
Adolescent Girls – Trauma

• Household Trauma

➢ Exposure to the following household trauma is associated with initiation and increased prevalence of substance use disorders:
  ▪ chaotic, unstructured, argumentative, and violent households
  ▪ being expected to take on adult responsibilities as a child
Adolescent Girls – Trauma and Stigma

• Girls and women with substance use or mental health conditions/disorders are more highly stigmatized and stereotyped

• Lesbian, bisexual, and transgender girls and women may experience additional discrimination and stigma as a result of their sexual orientation

• Discrimination, stigma and stereotyping may be barriers to accessing services (which can prevent or impede recovery)
Adolescent Girls - Trauma

- **Other Forms of Trauma**
  - Trafficking
  - Sexism, Racism and Discrimination
  - Sexual Harassment
  - Parental Separation and Divorce
  - Involvement with the Criminal Justice System
  - Disability (cognitive and physical)
It is important that we recognize girls as resilient and able to recover from the effects of trauma and substance use and mental health conditions/disorders.
Adolescent Girls – Biological/Physical

• Brain Maturation and Early Use
  ➢ Adolescent brains develop at least through age 25
    ▪ increases sensation-seeking behavior
    ▪ impacts the ability to make rational decisions
  ➢ Most mental illnesses develop before age 24
  ➢ Initiation of drug use before 14 leads to greater likelihood to abuse or become dependent later in life
  ➢ Adolescents prescribed opioids by grade 12 are 33% more likely to misuse prescription opioids by 23
Adolescent Girls – Biological/Physical

• Puberty

- Early puberty in girls is associated with the highest risk of substance use (compared with on-time or late developing girls)
- Adolescents who believe they are more advanced in puberty than their peers are more likely to have used cigarettes, alcohol and marijuana recently
Adolescent Girls – Biological/Physical

- Female Life Cycle and Physiology
  - Menstruation and puberty can influence mental health and substance use conditions, risks, and symptomology
  - Some studies have shown a link between sex hormones and pain sensitivity - including changes in pain perception across the menstrual cycle
  - Opioids and other substances may be used to cope with menstrual pain and cramps
Adolescent Girls – Biological/Physical

• Substance Use Vulnerabilities

- Girls ages 10-18 are more likely to report opioid misuse if they are current smokers or alcohol users (while boys’ misuse is only associated with smoking)
- Some adolescents have a genetic predisposition to substance use
- Girls are more vulnerable to the physical impacts of substance use and addiction (even low levels of use can have serious health consequences for girls)
Adolescent Girls – Biological/Physical

• **Telescoping**
  - Women and girls may become physically dependent on opioid pain medication more quickly than men and boys.
  - Physiological differences between the genders are likely factors in telescoping:
    - body fat percentages
    - metabolic rate
    - hormonal fluctuations
Adolescent Girls – Biological/Physical

The telescoping phenomenon supports the need for both screening and early intervention among adolescent girls and women in order to delay the progression of opioid use and misuse!
Adolescent Girls – Mental/Emotional

Mental health disorders including depression and anxiety are associated with increased risk for long-term opioid use among adolescents and emerging young adults.
Adolescent Girls – Mental/Emotional

• Mental Health Disorders
  - Mental health disorders are the most common diseases of childhood
  - An estimated 17.1 million of the 74.5 million children in the U.S. have or had a mental illness
  - Half of all mental illness occurs before age 14 and 75% by age 24
  - Many teens with a mental health disorder turn to alcohol or other drugs to “self-medicate”
Adolescent Girls – Mental/Emotional

• Depression and Anxiety
  ➢ Depression and bipolar disorder affect 14.3% of adolescents age 13-17
  ➢ There is a nearly two-fold increase in mood disorders from age 13 to 18, from 8.4% to 15.4%
  ➢ Adolescent girls are more than twice as likely to experience depression than boys, 15.9% vs 7.7%
  ➢ All anxiety disorder subtypes are more common in girls than boys (phobias, PTSD, panic disorder, etc.)
Adolescent Girls – Social Influences

- Peers and Partners
  - The presence of peers has been shown to influence risky behavior in social situations
  - Peer approval is highly rewarding to the teen brain - may be why teens are more likely to take risks when other teens are around
  - Adolescents who feel pressures from social media (feeling left out or like everyone else has a perfect life) may turn to alcohol and drugs
  - Women/girls are more likely to initiate hazardous drug use while in an intimate partner relationship
Adolescent Girls – Transitions

 Increases in substance use among girls is associated with the following transitions:

- Middle school to high school
- High school to college
- Moving from one neighborhood to another
- Major family/life events such as death, divorce or remarriage
- Puberty
- Dating/relationship break-up
Adolescent Girls – Transitions

• Top 5 Reasons Teens Use Drugs During Transitions
  ➢ To combat loneliness, low self-esteem, anxiety, or depression
  ➢ To mentally “check out” of family issues or school trouble
  ➢ To ease discomfort in an unfamiliar situation
  ➢ To look cool or change their image/reputation
  ➢ To fit in with a desired group of friends
Important Considerations in A-SBIRT with Girls

- Need to establish trust and rapport
- Demonstrate empathy, care, and appropriate boundaries
- Create a safe environment that encourages connection and empowerment
- Discuss sexuality in a respectful and sensitive manner
- Demonstrate culture and gender appropriate respect (through appropriate eye contact, language, tone of voice, and attention)
Resources

• Office on Women's Health (OWH) [www.womenshealth.gov](http://www.womenshealth.gov)
• SAMHSA’s *Addressing the Needs of Women and Girls: Developing Core Competencies for Mental Health and Substance Abuse Service Professionals* [https://store.samhsa.gov/shin/content/SMA11-4657/SMA11-4657.pdf](https://store.samhsa.gov/shin/content/SMA11-4657/SMA11-4657.pdf)
Resources

- **Substance Abuse Treatment: Addressing the Specific Needs of Women A Treatment Improvement Protocol TIP 51**
  [https://store.samhsa.gov/shin/content/SMA15-4426/SMA15-4426.pdf](https://store.samhsa.gov/shin/content/SMA15-4426/SMA15-4426.pdf)

- **Connecticut Clearinghouse** [www.ctclearinghouse.org](http://www.ctclearinghouse.org)
Special thanks to the Office on Women’s Health (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services) for funding this initiative!

The Connecticut Opioid Misuse Prevention (COMP) initiative is made possible with funding from grant no. ASTWH170052-01-00 from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Office on Women’s Health.