APA Recovery to Practice Curriculum

10. Forensic Issues I
Forensic Issues

For people with SMI, the prevalence of containment in prison/forensic system is high: men 15%; women 31%

For people exhibiting symptoms: 67 % greater likelihood of arrest

African American men especially at risk

Multitude of co-occurring problems:

- Severe trauma
- Homelessness
- Substance abuse
- Victimization
- Poor health
Forensic Issues, cont’d

Criminal Justice/Forensic systems antithetical to concept of recovery:
- Little treatment, emphasis on risk reduction
- Respect, person centered, cultural considerations, EBPs: not the norm in criminal justice/forensic settings
- Criminal justice/forensic settings are extremely re-traumatizing

Insufficient resources
- Personnel receive little to no training re people with mental health disorders

Extremely stigmatized by dual stigma – serious mental illness & criminality
Homelessness
- Due to double stigma of criminality and mental illness, little housing stock available

Co-occurring Substance Abuse
- More hospitalizations
- Higher suicide rate
- Poor social functioning
- Homelessness
- Violence
- People often excluded from treatment services
Forensic & Related Issues I: Homelessness, Substance Abuse, Trauma, Gender, Race, Culture

Trauma

- People with serious mental illnesses twice as likely to be victims of violence as those without illnesses
- Importance of trauma, especially for women cannot be overstated:
  - Trauma is the norm, especially for women: virtually all women in the criminal justice/forensic system have experienced severe trauma; most men have as well
- Criminal justice/forensic systems are universally re-traumatizing
- Effects of trauma so severe that mental health providers must use extreme care to avoid re-traumatizing people
Racial and Cultural Factors

- Clear differences in treatment for people of color
- African Americans especially overrepresented in criminal justice & forensic settings
  - Those with mental illnesses often mis-labelled as criminals
- Immigrants, refugees and people from diverse cultural backgrounds affected by many issues:
  - Language barriers
  - Fear of authoritarian systems
  - Different beliefs about mental illness
  - Different cultural values:
    - Women and children often not allowed to speak for themselves
    - Acceptability of familial abuse
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