

WORKSHOP 8

The Relationships Between Mental Health, Money & Poverty

As discussed in Workshop 1, there is a reciprocal link between mental health issues and financial issues. A person's mental health issues may affect their financial situation in a number of ways.

For example:

- If your ability to work is affected, you may experience a sudden drop in your income.
- If you are depressed, you may find it difficult to keep up with incoming bills.
- If you experience manic feelings, you may deplete your savings by spending more money than you can afford to, or you may accumulate a great deal of debt.

Likewise, a person's financial situation may affect their mental health issues in a number of ways.

For example:

- If you have accumulated a lot of debt, you may feel hopeless about your situation.
- Living in poverty can cause continual stress.
- Having your money controlled by a representative payee can cause you to feel powerless.

Additionally, sometimes treatment for mental health issues can lead to financial problems:

- Hospitalizations can not only interfere with a person's ability to access their personal finances while hospitalized, but the bills afterward can be overwhelming.
- Some psychiatric medications can cause memory problems, which make it difficult to keep up with finances.
- Blurred vision, shaky hands, or slowed movements caused by some medications can make signing checks or using ATMs or debit cards difficult.
- If psychiatric medications cause lethargy, a person may have difficulty with motivation to keep up with personal finances.¹⁰⁰

Poverty can have a significant impact on a person's mental and emotional well-being. Numerous studies indicate a correlation between mental health issues and poverty. *For example:*

- The lower the socioeconomic status of an individual is, the higher the risk of mental illness (Hudson, 2005).
- Major depression occurs more frequently among people of lower socioeconomic status (Gilman et al, 2002).

¹⁰⁰ Original material from Peerlink National Technical Assistance Center.