

Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) and Substance Use Disorder

Traumatic brain injury is a bump, blow or jolt to the head that disrupts the way the brain normally works. It can cause cognitive, physical, emotional and behavioral challenges.

It is important to have a clear understanding of the causes and risk factors related to TBI and Substance Use Disorder.

- About half of all incidents that lead to TBI involve the use of alcohol.
- 48 percent of individuals with TBI have a history of substance use disorder prior to sustaining a TBI (Corrigan, 1995).
- Between 10 percent and 20 percent of individuals with TBI develop a substance use disorder for the first time after their injury (Corrigan et al. 1995).
- Alcohol and other substances:
 - Increase the risk of sustaining additional TBI's.
 - Interfere with the brain's recovery process after brain injury.
 - Have a more powerful effect after brain injury.
 - Increase the risk of seizures after brain injury.

TBI and substance use can resemble each other with common characteristics including:

- Difficulty remembering
- Fatigue and sleep problems
- Difficulty with balance and coordination
- Personality changes
- Mood swings



In an effort to increase awareness, a person with a brain injury can carry a survivor wallet card to help avoid misunderstandings with law enforcement, first responders and others. The wallet card includes contact information, an emergency contact and possible symptoms of brain injury. The brain injury survivor wallet card can be found by clicking the link below or by visiting www.bianc.net

Click here for a printable version of the Brain Injury Survivor Wallet Card.

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TBI Screening Tools

The websites below provide screening tools that are not for diagnostic purposes.

The Ohio State University TBI Identification Method (OSU TBI-ID)
www.ohiovalley.org/informationeducation

HELPS Brain Injury Screening Tool
North Carolina TBI Training Module 3: HELPS
www.nctbitraining.org

For resources and referral for TBI services, contact:

Brain Injury Association of North Carolina (BIANC)
www.bianc.net

Brain Injury Resource Centers

Raleigh 800-377-1464
Charlotte 704-355-1502
Winston Salem 336-713-8582
Asheville 828-277-4868
Greenville 252-717-3347

For more information about co-occurring TBI and Substance Use Disorder, visit:

Training on TBI in North Carolina
www.nctbitraining.org

BrainLine.org
www.brainline.org

You can find this TBI and SUD information sheet along with additional TBI information at the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services website.

<http://www.ncdhhs.gov/assistance/disability-services/traumatic-brain-injury>



*Mental Health,
Developmental Disabilities,
and Substance Abuse Services*
HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

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Division of Social Services
www.ncdhhs.gov • www.ncdhhs.gov/dss

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