



# NCADD

NATIONAL COUNCIL ON ALCOHOLISM AND  
DRUG DEPENDENCE, INC.

## An Invisible Epidemic: Alcoholism and Drug Dependence Among Older Adults

**OVERVIEW:** Alcohol and drug problems among older adults are health care issues that are frequently hidden, overlooked and misdiagnosed. Consequently, the personal, family and health care costs are overwhelming. Although alcohol and drug problems among seniors are increasing dramatically, our awareness, understanding and response to this health care problem is inadequate.

### BACKGROUND: FACTS AND INFORMATION

- By 2030, one third of the U.S. population will be age 55 or older
- 6-11% of all elderly patients admitted to hospitals exhibit symptoms of alcoholism
- 20% of all elderly patients admitted to psychiatric services exhibit symptoms of alcoholism
- 14% of all elderly patients in emergency rooms exhibit symptoms of alcoholism
- The prevalence of problem drinking in nursing homes is as high as 49% in some studies
- 17% (8 million) older adults abuse alcohol and drugs- SAMHSA
- Less than 2% of all admissions for alcohol and drug treatment are people over age 55
- 80% of all senior admissions were for alcohol as the primary drug
- Illicit drug use among seniors is projected to double by 2020 to 3.5 million

### ALCOHOL AND DRUGS: IMPACT ON OLDER ADULTS

- *Alcoholism and Drug Dependence*
- *Grandparents Raising Grandchildren- 5.8 million kids- parental alcohol and drug use- up to 80%*
- *Seniors in Recovery from Alcoholism and Drug Dependence*

### THE COST

- \$ 30 billion: 1998 health care costs of alcohol & drug problems among older adults- CASA
- \$100 billion: 2018 projected health care costs of alcohol & drug problems among older adults

### About NCADD

Founded in 1944, NCADD is dedicated to increasing public awareness and understanding of the disease of alcoholism and drug dependence. NCADD's leadership and advocacy on policy issues at the national level has changed the course of alcoholism and addiction treatment in America. NCADD and its National Network of Affiliates, provide education, prevention, information/referral, intervention and treatment services and have helped hundreds of thousands of individuals and families into recovery.

**Last year, 713,000 people called NCADD seeking help for themselves, a family member or a friend.**

**Alcoholism & drug addiction are treatable; millions of people and families are in recovery!**

**National Council on Alcoholism and  
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