

Co-Occurring Disorders:

The Critical Link Between Mental Health and SUD

How two thought leaders are changing the way SUD is approached and treated

Monday, December 12 | 7 p.m. EST | Virtual Forum: Zoom or Facebook Live

At the age of 3, Harris Marquesano was diagnosed with an anxiety disorder. Eighth grade brought an ADHD diagnosis and his discovery of marijuana. After being discharged by a psychologist for being “too much” to handle, Harris was introduced to OxyContin as a high school junior. His parents took him to a number of treatment facilities, professionals and 12-step meetings — but none addressed his mental health and substance use disorders (SUDs) *together*. Tragically, Harris died of an opioid overdose at just 19 years old.

Harris’s story is featured in a June 24, 2022, article in *The New York Times* titled, [Experts Say We Have the Tools to Fight Addiction. So Why Are More Americans Overdosing Than Ever?](#) According to the article, it’s common for mental health challenges and SUDs to occur together, and roughly half of those who have one also have the other. What’s more, those with mental health disorders are much more likely to become addicted and face a higher risk of overdose.

For our December Family Forum, we’ll welcome Harris’s mother, **Stephanie Marquesano**, founder and president of the Harris Project, the only nonprofit in the nation committed to the prevention and treatment of co-occurring disorders — the combination of one or more mental health challenges and substance misuse and/or addiction. Stephanie will discuss why it’s crucial for these disorders to be managed together, especially in teenagers and young adults.

Joining Stephanie will be **Kenneth Minkoff, MD**, a board-certified psychiatrist with additional qualifications in addiction psychiatry, a dedicated community psychiatrist and a clinical assistant professor of psychiatry at Harvard Medical School. Dr. Minkoff is recognized as one of the nation’s leading experts on integrated treatment of individuals with co-occurring psychiatric and substance disorders or “dual diagnosis.”

Stephanie’s family tragedy sparked a movement in New York to work toward fully integrating mental health, SUD and, ultimately, primary care services. By developing a common, comprehensive, and universal template for screening, assessment, and treatment planning, providers will be able to get a more accurate view of an individual’s needs to create a co-occurring capable, person-centered treatment plan.

At our forum, we’ll learn more about this approach from Stephanie and Dr. Minkoff, and discuss whether the New York model makes sense for Michigan. You won’t want to miss it!

To learn more about Stephanie’s mission, we invite you to watch [A Plan of Action for COD \(co-occurring disorders\): The Harris Project \(Episode 53\)](#)

Meet Our Guest Speakers:



Stephanie Marquesano is a former New York City attorney and passionate advocate, speaker and voice for those with co-occurring disorders and their loved ones. Through the Harris Project, she advocates for co-occurring capable care, i.e., integrated treatment; empowering youth to make positive decisions through an understanding of paths to substance misuse/addiction (including mental health challenges, sports injury, wisdom tooth removal and brain changes caused by use); and, supporting the creation of best practices in early identification/intervention.



Kenneth Minkoff, MD, is a nationally recognized expert in the development of integrated systems of care for individuals with co-occurring psychiatric and substance disorders, through the implementation of a national consensus best practice model for systems design: the Comprehensive Continuous Integrated System of Care (CCISC), referenced in SAMHSA’s Report to Congress on Co-occurring Disorders (2002). He has developed an integrated conceptual framework for treatment of co-occurring disorders based on application of a disease and recovery model, with parallel phases of treatment and recovery for each disorder, and co-edited the book, *Dual Diagnosis of Major Mental Illness and Substance Disorder*. In addition, Dr. Minkoff has developed considerable expertise in public and private managed care.