The Community Networks of Specialized Care (CNSC) (community-networks.ca) use a collaborative approach to treat and support adults who have a dual diagnosis in their own community by bringing service providers together from across the developmental services, health, research, education, and justice sectors.

The Networks strive to improve the quality of life of adults with a developmental disability and co-existing mental health issue and/or challenging behaviours. Based in Ontario, CNSC serves four regional areas by providing a coordinated specialized service system and builds capacity in the community by focusing on training and use of best practices.

Part of the mandate of the CNSC is to identify and respond to local community training needs. The North region of the CNSC (NCNSC) identified there was a need in the community for more introductory training on the topic of dual diagnosis and how to apply this knowledge in practice.

What is the initiative?
To meet this need, the NCNSC developed four training modules as part of an introductory course. The content for these modules is based on *Dual Diagnosis: An Introduction to the Mental Health Needs of Persons with Development Disabilities*, a text developed by the Ontario Chapter of the National Association for the Dually Diagnosis.

The four modules include application exercises and case studies to promote the transfer of knowledge and skills into practice. Content of the course includes:

- Basic introduction to developmental disabilities;
- Recognizing and understanding the mental health needs of persons with developmental disabilities within a biopsychosocial model;
- Strategies for optimizing supports;
- Criteria used by health care professionals to recognize and differentiate various psychiatric conditions.

NCNSC adapted the modules for online learning rather than in-person workshop. This online course can be accessed anytime, from anywhere, and can be completed over 3 months. This format expands
access to this training for rural and remote communities across Northern and other regions of Ontario and also provides greater flexibility for busy service providers. The fee for the course is a nominal $5.

The course became available in English in November 2008, and a French version of the course was launched in September 2013 to meet the needs of the bilingual and Francophone service providers across the province. There is no similar online course available in Ontario.

Pilot Phase
Between November 2007 and March 2008, NCNSC tested the newly developed course. Seventy direct service providers, supervisors, and clinicians from 23 developmental service and mental health agencies across Northern Ontario completed the course and provided feedback. The majority of individuals that completed the course indicated that:

- The online format was a good way to learn the material;
- The application exercises reinforce understanding of the material;
- They would use the knowledge and skills they acquired in the course.

This feedback assisted in the final development of the course content and delivery system.

What are the outcomes?
The intended outcome of this course is to increase knowledge and expertise for those providing care for persons with dual diagnosis across the province. Since it launched, more than 660 individuals have completed the course from the mental health, developmental services, education, primary health, and justice sectors.

The course is currently a requirement in the Behavioural Science Certificate Program at Humber College. The Behavior Analyst Certification Board approved Humber College’s Behavioural Science Program course sequence as meeting the 4th tasklist coursework requirements for eligibility to take the Board Certified Assistant Behavior Analyst Examination. See www.bacb.com for more details.

John Ksomopoulos, coordinator of the program at Humber College, said "We found the course to be invaluable as a learning tool for dual diagnosis. It allows students to get a better grasp of what it is and what kind of supports are necessary to work with individuals with complex needs. As many of our graduates will be working in the field and supporting individuals with dual diagnosis, it is a great primer and a comprehensive look at the topic."

One individual who completed the course said, “This was a very informative course with which I learned a lot about Dual Diagnosis which I had not previously known before. I would definitely recommend this course to others!” Another said, “Very informative, easy to understand, with great examples.”
NCNSC will evaluate the course on an ongoing basis to improve on its delivery and ensure it continues to meet the training needs of communities across Northern Ontario.

The EENet Perspective
The development of this flexible online course represents a direct response to community-based need for more training on the topic of Dual Diagnosis. Its format has made it accessible to communities across Northern Ontario and across various sectors. By focusing on promoting the transfer of knowledge into direct service provision, this important and promising practice can enhance the care of and overall outcomes of persons with dual diagnosis across Ontario.

For information about this course, please contact:
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Hands TheFamilyHelpNetwork.ca
www.thefamilyhelpnetwork.ca

To Access the DUAL DIAGNOSIS course:
www.learninglibrary.com/ncnsc

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