



Southern Connecticut State University

MSW COHORT PROGRAM IN CO-OCCURRING DISORDERS

"Pursuing Excellence, Fostering Leadership, Empowering Communities"
DMHAS/SCSU COD-Cohort collaboration (2007 – present) - Jaak Rakfeldt, Ph.D.

What is a Co-occurring Disorder?

A person who has at least one mental health disorder and who also abuses drugs or alcohol

1 Mental Health Disorder

- Bipolar
- Anxiety
- Depression
- PTSD
- Schizophrenia

2 Substance Abuse Problem

- Alcohol
- Opiates
- Marijuana
- Cocaine
- Meth

Co-occurring Disorder Rates

About **8.9** million Americans have a co-occurring disorder involving substance abuse and mental illness

Drug Addiction | Mental Illness | General Population

2X Addicts and mental illness sufferers are 2x as likely to have a co-occurring disorder

↑ Individuals with addiction or mental illness

Larry Davidson
Jaak Rakfeldt
and John Strauss

THE ROOTS OF THE RECOVERY MOVEMENT IN PSYCHIATRY
Lessons Learned

WILEY-BLACKWELL

COD-Cohort students earn MSW's through completing hybrid classes in 3-day weekends/month (Fri, Sat, Sun) over 3-years. Curriculum: Psycho-education regarding SAMI for clients and families; behaviorally tailored interventions (meds) as recovery tools - motivational enhancement, stages of change; CBT treatments, etc. Client choice, active participation in their recovery (person-centered, recovery-oriented practice); individualized recovery plans - integrated stage-wise services, flexible, variable: based on clients' wants, goals, aspirations, strengths, resources, skills - adult roles as full-fledged citizens.

Contact: SCSU MSW Admissions Office - Michaelsend1@southernct.edu

"This program has given me the opportunity to advance my education while I continue to work full time and meet obligations to my family, friends and community."

Co-Occurring Disorders: The Critical Need

According to SAMHSA, the federal Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, an estimated 50% to 75% of patients in substance abuse treatment programs have a co-occurring mental illness, while 20% to 50% of patients in mental health treatment have co-occurring substance use.

Despite the high incidence, **most people with co-occurring disorders do not receive appropriate treatment for both mental disorders and substance use. Many receive no treatment of any kind.**

It was in response to this critical need that the SCSU Social Work Department and the Connecticut Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS) developed the MSW Cohort Program in Co-Occurring Disorders. The goal of the program is to prepare social workers who provide effective, comprehensive, integrated, and evidence-based services for adults with co-occurring disorders (CODs).

The COD Cohort program allows professionals in the field of mental health and addictions to earn their MSW degree while maintaining employment. COD Cohort participants meet for a three-day period each month (typically Fridays, Saturdays, and Sundays) for three calendar years including one summer. The COD Cohort program emphasizes an adult learning paradigm in which courses are taken sequentially, participants build a strong learning community, and self-discipline and self-directed learning are keys to success.

“Over the three years classmates have turned into family, people I can go to for support who truly know what I'm going through.”

“My experience in the COD Cohort program helped me mature, taught me to make time for fun, and allowed me to develop into a clinical social worker ready to enter the field.”

Program Design

Participants in the COD Cohort program complete the same requirements as students in the traditional MSW program, however courses are delivered in a format that is designed for employed professionals.

- The Cohort program meets three-days per month (typically Friday, Saturday, & Sunday)
- Most courses are delivered in a hybrid format (partly on campus and partly online)
- Syllabi, readings, and written assignments are provided two to three weeks prior to the start of each class
- Participants interact online with each other and with the instructor in between class sessions
- The final written assignment is usually due two to three weeks following the last class

Field Education

Field education is tightly integrated into the curriculum of the COD Cohort program.

- Participants complete their 1,100 hours of field practice over two calendar years
- Field placements include DMHAS or agencies contracted by DMHAS
- Field placements may be held in the participant's place of employment, provided that educational responsibilities and supervision are separate and distinct from those of the participant's job

“The most exciting part of this program was to watch my learning ‘in vivo’ to see the diagnoses, the theories, what the professors were teaching me come to realization or life while at my placement and place of employment.”

Acclaimed Faculty

The COD Cohort program is led by Professor Jaak Rakfeldt, Ph.D., L.C.S.W., an award-winning educator and an internationally renowned researcher and clinician in the area of mental health and substance use. Courses are taught by Dr. Rakfeldt and by other members of the acclaimed social work faculty: <http://www.southernct.edu/academics/schools/health/academic-programs/socialwork/faculty.html>



Jaak Rakfeldt, Ph.D., L.C.S.W., Professor and COD Cohort Program Coordinator

"The COD Cohort program really has a guiding light from Dr. Rakfeldt. His enthusiasm and dedication to the cohort kept us pressing forward. His love of teaching and seeing his students succeed was inspirational and motivating."

Admissions

The COD Cohort program is open to all students with an interest in the field of co-occurring disorders. Qualified applicants from DMHAS and its contract agencies are strongly encouraged to apply. Admissions requirements and procedures for the COD Cohort program are the same as those for other MSW programs: <https://southernct.edu/gradadmissions/>

For further information, please contact:

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