



Health & Education

\$7.5 million available to treat women affected by substance abuse, mental illness and violence

CONTRIBUTED STORY
FOR THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's (SAMHSA) Center for Substance Abuse Treatment (CSAT) today announced the availability of \$7.5 million dollars to support 10 grants to expand treatment of women with histories of substance abuse, physical and sexual abuse and mental illness.

The grants are available only to those programs that currently are grantees for phase one of this program. This restriction will enable grantees to proceed immediately to improving the knowledge base, since they have already established an integrated system of care for women with co-occurring disorders, including histories of physical and sexual abuse. An additional \$1.2 million will be available to support as many as five grantee awards for study sites and an award for a coordinating center to evaluate children of these women who have been impacted by their mothers' co-occurring disorders and histories of violence.

"SAMHSA is committed to following through with grants and technical assistance to generate important knowledge on how to develop integrated services for women that work," SAMHSA Administrator Nelba Chavez, Ph.D., said. "These grants will help fill in the gaps in what we now know about histories of violence and how they affect treatment of co-occurring disorders. Phase one identified promising models for intervention services. Now we must test these models to see what will work to reach women who have suffered complex interactions from trauma, substance abuse and mental illness."

CSAT Director H. Westley Clark, M.D., J.D., M.P.H., noted that "substance abuse cannot be addressed in a vacuum. The combination of substance abuse, mental illness and violence has to be addressed together if we are to give hope to these women, and their young children, that recovery is possible and the cycle of pain can be broken."

This implementation study of programs for women is a partnership among the Center for Substance Abuse Treatment, the Center for Mental Health Services and the Center for Substance Abuse Treatment.

Applications for grants of \$700,000 to \$750,000 for the women's program and a maximum of \$200,000 for the children's study will be accepted from current phase one grantees until June 13, 2000.

Applications are available on SAMHSA's web site, www.samhsa.gov, as well as by calling 1-800-729-6686. Refer to GFA Number TI00-003 for the women's program and TI00-006 for the children's subset. Questions on program issues should be directed to, Melissa Rael, RN, M.A., project officer, at 301-443-8236. Grants management questions should be directed to Christine Chen at 301-443-8926.

Health Briefs

Parents should set time for Easter candy

Parents should set a time limit for how long candy from the Easter bunny remains in the house.

"Make a deal with your kids that Easter candy will be removed after about a week," said Dr. Janice Stuff, Nutrition's at the USDA/ARS Children's Nutrition's Research Center at Baylor College of Medicine in Houston. After that time, pick special time to give candy to your kids. An occasional taste will help satisfy their sweet tooth."

Eating too much candy can affect a child's appetite and cause the child to develop bad eating habits. If children don't have a good appetite, they might not regularly eat the fruits, vegetables and meats needed to grow up healthy and strong.

Bottled water and contact lenses don't mix.

A new study finds using bottled water to rinse and store contact lenses might do more harm than good.

Researchers at Baylor College of Medicine Houston purchased 23 brands of bottled water and tested them for contamination.

"We found that nearly a third of the bottled water was contaminated with bacteria and other microorganisms, including molds, algae and amoebas," said Dr. Kirk Wilhelms, a Baylor professor of ophthalmology.

Using contaminated bottled water to rinse contact lenses passes the bacteria to the surface of the lens. If bacteria or other microorganisms get into the eye, they could potentially cause a serious infection of the cornea. Wilhelms urges those who wear contact lenses to use contact-lens solution and follow a strict disinfection regimen to avoid serious eye infections.

Listeria could harm pregnant women and unborn child

A bacteria called listeria can have a devastating effect on a pregnant woman and her unborn child.

"Listeria has been known to cause an infection in the lining of the uterus before birth that can be life-threatening for both mother and child," said Dr. Flor Munoz, an infectious-disease expert with Baylor College of Medicine in Houston. "The infection can trigger a spontaneous abortion of Listeria found in foods such as unpasteurized milk products, uncooked meat, hot dogs deli meats and soft like brie.

Mercury poisoning can be deadly

Mercury poisoning is not very common, but it can be deadly for children. Mercury is a silvery metal that is extremely poisonous. Children can become exposed from broken glass thermometers, which contain

elemental liquid mercury, and thimerosal, a mercury compound used in vaccines.

"Children who come in contact with mercury can develop respiratory problems, and if the metal penetrates the brain, brain damage," said Dr. Erin Endom, an assistant professor of pediatric emergency medicine at Baylor College of Medicine and Texas Children's Hospital in Houston.

Although thimerosal has never been proven to cause mercury poisoning in children, physicians are concerned about the increased number of thimerosal-containing vaccines given to children.

Typical signs of depression include: Sleep problems

Failure to gain pleasure from previously enjoyed activities
Decreased energy or concentration
Changes in appetite
Feelings of hopelessness and helplessness

Thoughts of death and suicide.
If you know an elderly person with any of these symptoms, encourage them to seek medical attention as soon as possible, Molinari said.

Perimenopause can make life difficult for women

Perimenopause, a time between a woman's reproductive years and her final menstrual cycle, can be difficult. But relief is available.

"We can help perimenopausal women by giving them low-dose birth control pills help regulate her periods and supplement the estrogen she is no longer producing adequately."

Perimenopause usually occurs around age 45 and can last anywhere from a few days to a few years. Approximately 80 percent of women go through some form of perimenopause. During this time a women might experience irregular periods, hot flashes, night sweats, sleep problems, changes in weight skin and hair, depression, mood swings and poor concentration.

Birth-control pills combined with a low-fat, high-fiber diet rich in calcium and vitamins can make life more bearable for these women, Zurawin said.

Depression not normal part of aging

Depression is not a normal part of aging, but rather a medical condition that should be treated aggressively.

"About three percent of the elderly living independently in the community will experience depression," said Dr. Victor Molinari, a psychologist at Baylor College of Medicine and director of geropsychology at the Veterans Affairs Medical Center in Houston. That number increases to between 20 and 30 percent of people in nursing homes or with chronic illnesses such as emphysema, heart disease or diabetes."

Two personality types are also high risk: obsessive/compulsive people bothered by their lack of control over changes related to aging, and dependent persons who lose loved ones.

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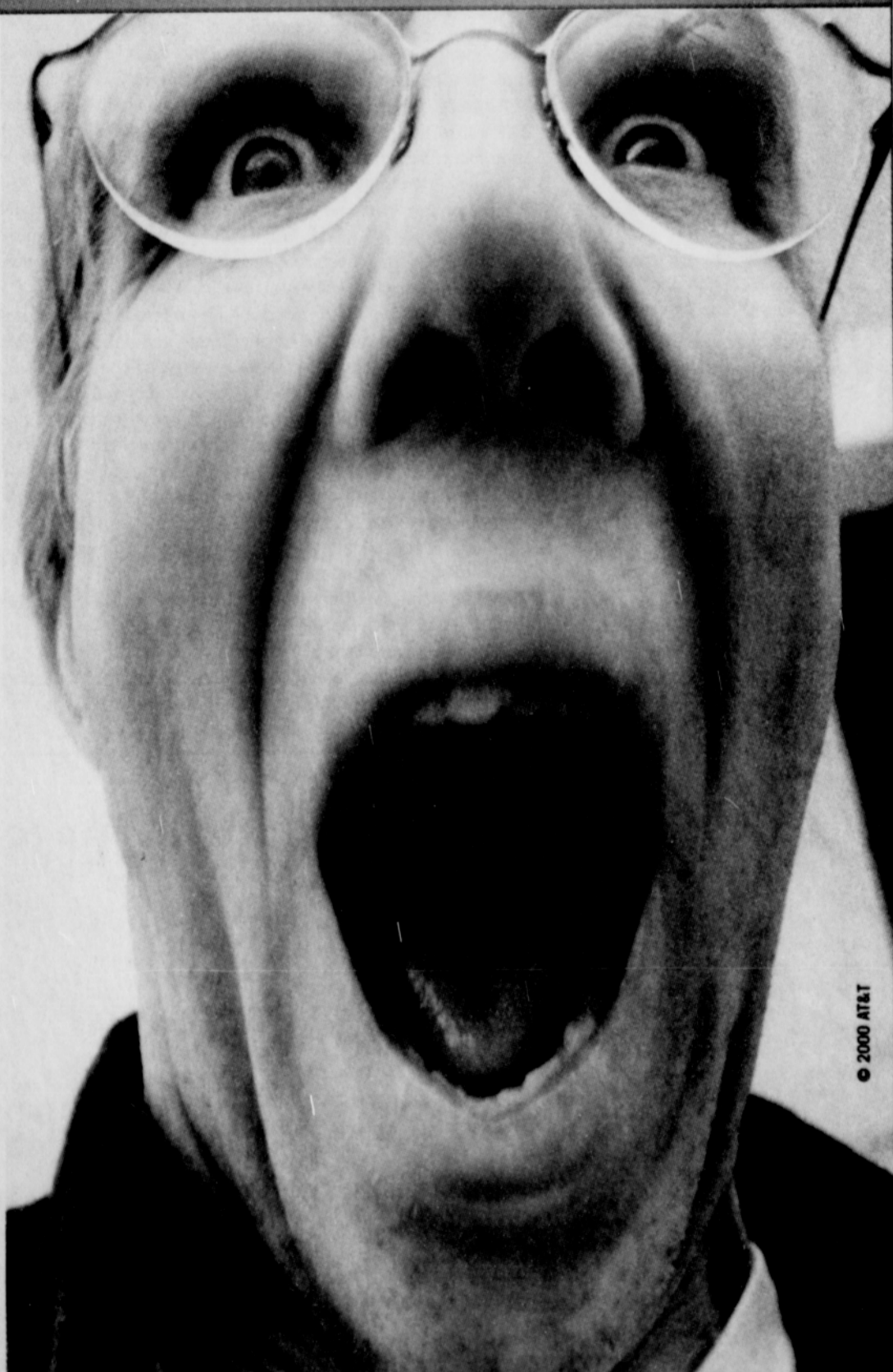
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