

## Appendix J - NY Issue Brief: Health Curricula

And, according to the American Psychiatric Association (APA):

- Patients with mood or anxiety disorders are about twice as likely to also suffer from a drug disorder.
- Patients with drug disorders are roughly twice as likely to be diagnosed with mood or anxiety disorders.
- The high rate of comorbid substance abuse and mental illness points to the need for a comprehensive approach that identifies, evaluates, and simultaneously treats both disorders.
- The health care systems in place to treat substance abuse and mental illness are typically disconnected, hence inefficient. Physicians tend to treat patients with mental illnesses, whereas a mix of providers with varying backgrounds deliver drug abuse treatment.

The same disconnect in our health care system and our treatment approaches to mental health and substance use disorders (what we now refer to collectively as behavioral health) is unfortunately mirrored in the way we teach young people about substances and addictions, completely ignoring the role of mental health.

***Recommendation:*** Amend State Education Law with respect to school health curricula to enhance the existing requirement regarding instruction in alcohol, drugs and tobacco to incorporate the interrelationship between mental health and the misuse of, and addiction to, alcohol, drugs and tobacco, including a greater emphasis on highly addictive and potentially lethal drugs including opioids.

*For more information on the legislative initiative to include mental health instruction in school health curricula, please contact John Richter, Director of Public Policy, MHANYS at 518-434-0439, ext. 229*