



**MARIN SERVICES for Women** A HEALING COMMUNITY FOR WOMEN RECOVERING FROM CHEMICAL DEPENDENCY AND TRAUMA

**For Further Information Contact:**

Tamara John  
Marin Services for Women  
(415) 924-5995, ext. 30  
tjohn@mswinc.org

**Number of Older Adults Entering Into  
Substance Abuse Treatment Is Rising**

**Greenbrae, CA, June 5, 2006** – A recent study shows that the number of adults over age 55 entering into treatment for drug and alcohol abuse rose by nearly a third from 1995 to 2002, according to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). And the trend is not showing any signs of slowing down. Researchers predict that there will be 5 million people age 50 or older with addictions by 2020, up from 2.5 million in 1999. Misuse of alcohol and prescription drugs plays a huge role in the trend.

Marin Services for Women, a drug and alcohol treatment facility with a 28-year track record of providing services focused on the unique needs of women, has seen the effects of this trend in its clients and is adapting to meet the special needs of this growing population. “At Marin Services for Women, we realize that there are numerous factors, including loss, grief, isolation, depression, unstructured time and health problems, that can lead an older adult to substance abuse,” states Executive Director Ann Harrison.

To meet the needs of older women, Marin Services for Women provides specialized treatment groups for older adults, facilitated by an older adult substance abuse counselor, to address these factors. “It is important that a separate group is created for older adults because ageism creates a tangible issue that increases the stigma placed on older adults struggling with substance abuse,” says Counselor Julie Mullin. “As adults age, there is often the assumption that they are cognitively disabled and can not make their own decisions or know what is right or wrong for themselves. Pairing the stigma of age with that of substance abuse only compounds the issue.” Training of all program staff in the needs of older women is an ongoing process.

The use of and over prescription of prescribed medication in conjunction with the use of alcohol creates a higher risk of health complication for older adults and a unique set of special needs. Some of the health risks that are increased with substance abuse include hypertension, cardiac problems, stroke, an impaired immune system and decreased bone density.

Older adults often face depression, anxiety, sleep disorders and an increased risk of accidents. It is also common for older adults to have limited support networks due to the death of loved ones and financial changes that can force individuals out of their homes and neighborhoods and into new areas. As with most people that have a history of substance abuse, older adults may also become distant from friends and family who are tired of their broken promises.

This lack of a sufficient support network paired with the increased health complications creates an even greater need for older adults to enter into a healing community for drug and alcohol abuse recovery. Marin Services for Women fills this need by providing older women with the education and support network that they require in order to live healthy lives.

For more information on the Bay Area's aging population and substance abuse, contact Ann Harrison at 415-924-5995 ext. 17.

*Marin Services for Women is a licensed, non-profit corporation that provides chemical dependency recovery programs for women and families. Since 1978, MSW has offered a variety of unique programs to assist women in recovering from addiction in a safe, supportive, healing environment. Marin Services for Women graduates a remarkable 70% of clients who enter their programs. The mission of MSW is to advance community health by providing a full continuum of superior quality chemical dependency recovery services for women and their families. MSW's philosophy links recovery from addiction with personal, relational, and economic empowerment. MSW is dedicated to meeting the community's need to understand the nature, prevention and treatment of alcohol and other drug addiction.*

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