

# Data Spotlight

National Survey on Drug Use and Health

January 31, 2012

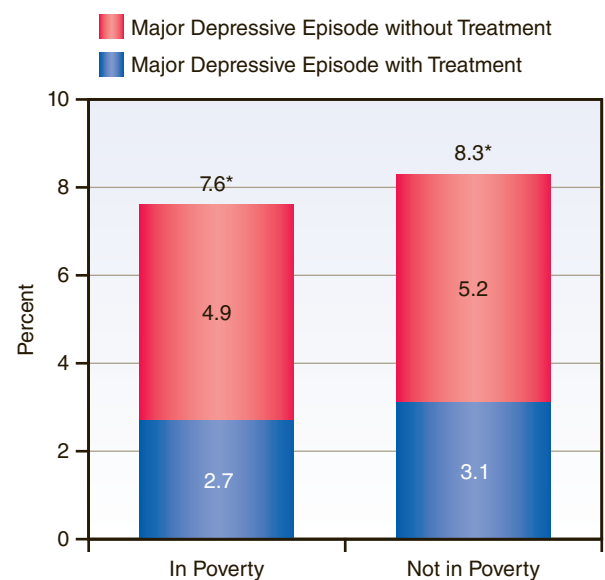
## Major Depressive Episode among Adolescents Living in Poverty

According to the National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH), among all adolescents with past year major depressive episode (MDE), nearly two thirds (62.3 percent) did not receive treatment for their depression. While nearly one in five adolescents (18.4 percent, or an estimated 4.6 million persons) live in poverty,<sup>1</sup> adolescents living in poverty were slightly less likely than those not living in poverty to have experienced MDE in the past year (7.6 vs. 8.3 percent; Figure).<sup>2</sup> However, receipt of treatment was unrelated to poverty status.<sup>3</sup> Adolescents with MDE who were living in poverty had about the same likelihood of having received some form of treatment as did adolescents with MDE who were not living in poverty (36.1 vs. 38.0 percent).

Depression in adolescence has been linked to a number of negative health outcomes, including substance abuse, eating disorders, and suicide.<sup>4</sup> Parents, friends, teachers, coaches, and physicians can all play a role in recognizing depression symptoms and helping adolescents access the services they need. For more information, see <http://store.samhsa.gov/product/Helping-Children-and-Youth-with-Major-Depression-Systems-of-Care/SMA06-4198>.

The findings in this analysis suggest that many adolescents with past year MDE are not getting treatment and that lack of treatment is not limited to those living in poverty.

**Major Depressive Episode in the Past Year among Youths Aged 12 to 17, by Poverty Level and Receipt of Treatment: 2005 to 2010**



\*Difference between those living in poverty and those living not in poverty was statistically significant at the .05 level.

<sup>1</sup> The poverty level is calculated as a percentage of the U.S. Census Bureau's poverty threshold by dividing the respondent's reported total family income by the appropriate poverty threshold amount. If a family's total income is at or below the Census Bureau's poverty threshold for the corresponding size and composition, then that family and every individual in it is considered to be living in poverty.

<sup>2</sup> MDE is defined using the criteria set forth in the fourth edition of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (DSM-IV), which specifies a period of 2 weeks or longer in which there is either depressed mood or loss of interest or pleasure and at least four other symptoms that reflect a change in functioning, such as problems with sleep, eating, energy, concentration, and self-image. See American Psychiatric Association. (1994). *Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders* (4th edition). Washington, DC: Author.

<sup>3</sup> Treatment for depression is defined as seeing or talking to a medical doctor or other professional or using prescription medication in the past year for depression.

<sup>4</sup> National Institute of Mental Health. (2011). *Depression* (NIH Publication No. 11-3561). Bethesda, MD: Author. Retrieved from <http://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/publications/depression/depression-booklet.pdf>

Source: 2005 to 2010 National Surveys on Drug Use and Health (NSDUHs). The NSDUH is an annual survey sponsored by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). The survey collects data by administering questionnaires to a representative sample of the population through face-to-face interviews at their places of residence.

