



How Everyone on the Team Can Support the Family

This information sheet was developed as part of the workshops held at the November 2014 *EPION Think Tank on Family Work*. It is intended for EPI programs in Ontario to use as a tool to promote discussion within their own organization and networks. There are 7 information sheets in total coming from the EPION Think Tank on Family Work. They are:

- Tips for EPI staff in working with families: What family members want you to know
- How to develop a family support network that is not dependent on EPI staff to convene
- Supporting families when their loved one comes in conflict with the law
- What other EPI team members need to know about family work: How everyone on the team can help support the family
- Choosing a family assessment tool
- Helping families at time of discharge: What do families need to know when their loved one is transitioning into the adult mental health system?
- Self care for family support workers

About this Topic:

The work that EPI programs do to support family members goes beyond the efforts of the family worker. All members of an EPI team have a role to play in supporting and involving families in the care of their loved one with psychosis. The following highlights strategies for increasing the opportunities for team collaboration in supporting families connected with EPI programs.

Challenges and Considerations:

- Do you divide family worker role or have dedicated staff for this role?
- Concern about not having skill set to do intense family therapy
- Is Family Support different for different family dynamics, composition and needs?

Solutions/Strategies:

- Buddy system pairing clinicians with different expertise e.g. RN – SW teams
- Sharing patient / client / family information between different treatment disciplines ie break down silos → communication
- Define roles of each team member from the start through an orientation package, including a Welcome to the Program letter, outlining the importance of family/caregiver involvement.
- Ensure that all members of the team, inclusive of the caregivers and clients themselves, have an understanding and appreciation for the therapeutic value of this type of support
- Discuss family involvement early on where appropriate
- Be open to different configurations of what families are

- Training for team members about how to do family therapy and strategies to be supportive with family and respect confidentiality of client
- Cross pollination of family therapy skills by co-leading groups and teaching – this incorporates a multi-disciplinary approach to family support, adding perspective and informed responses for treatment planning and support
- Flexibility of team members to expand the scope of their skills and learn from each other
- Communicate treatment goals and strategies to family MD, psychiatrist, interdisciplinary team involved (from the start and give updates)
- Involve family in assessment to enrich the 360 degree view of the client
- Provide info and support about mobile crisis, ER, police, Mental Health Act before family member becomes a client – this will form the basis for the comprehensive introduction and orientation process, familiarizing and informing caregivers about rights and responsibilities, program process, and community resources, etc...

What do team members need to know about family work?

- Clearly define roles with family work for all team members and family
- We need to collaborate and communicate clearly
- Provide consistent messages to family
- Flexibility and adaptability
- Cultural awareness / sensitivity needed

How can team members make a difference?

- Provide welcome letters and contact information
- Be aware of boundaries
- Be aware of social determinants of health of family
- Be aware of potential for family member mental illness
- See family as the client as well i.e. siblings, spouses, children etc.
- Preserve capacity to do couple and group work
- Ensure that the caregiver and client are included in every step of the process, as they are an integral part of the team through their lived/shared experience, and commitment towards recovery
- Identify needs which are both unique to the client and the caregiver, providing support where needed, either individually or in a unified model of care
- Make every effort to include the primary care provider, as metabolic issues are directly impacted by introduction of medications used to treat psychosis
- Role of advocacy to bring the importance of systemic / family approach to higher levels
- Keep family educated and supported at all stages of recovery

- Family networking: develop contact lists, promote the 'buddy system', provide individual and group supports where appropriate, engage in best practices when utilizing resources which provide psycho-education, promote peer supports and foster 'champions' wherever possible to include and empower caregivers to become more involved if they should choose