

# Family Psychoeducation

Implementation Resource Kit



DRAFT VERSION  
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## Information for Families and Other Supporters

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### Would it help if your family...

- ▶ understood more about symptoms of mental illness?
- ▶ knew how to help with a mental illness?
- ▶ could help better with recovery?
- ▶ had less stress overall?

*Family Psychoeducation can help your family with these concerns.*

### Understanding Family Psychoeducation

When someone you care about has a serious mental illness, it can be hard on the whole family. You want to help your family member get better, but may not know how. Family psychoeducation is a way you can help your family member get better and make life less stressful for your whole family.

## Do I have to be a family member?

No. You just have to be willing to be supportive of the person with mental illness. You do not have to live in the same house. Other relatives, close friends, and even neighbors can be very helpful.

## How can this help my family?

- ▶ You learn about mental illness.
- ▶ You learn that other people have similar needs and experiences.
- ▶ You may have improved family relationships and general health.
- ▶ You learn new ways to deal with the common problems caused by the illness, problems that often create stress, confusion and disagreements, such as:
  - taking medication
  - finding and keeping a job
  - taking part in social activities

## How does it work?

You and your family meet as a single family with a practitioner or in a group with other families of people with mental illness. Groups are held every other week for several months. Studies have shown the best results occur when your family meets for at least nine months. Additional time promotes improved outcomes.

## What is the format of family psychoeducation?

### *Introductory sessions*

Family members meet with a practitioner, together or separately. The focus is to talk about what is going on, such as troubling symptoms, daily routine, lack of a job, etc. The family and practitioner start to develop a partnership during this time.

### *Educational workshop*

For families in both single and multi-family psychoeducation, this is a key element. Families come together in a classroom session to learn the basics of mental illness, as well as what the family can do to work together towards recovery and stay well.

### *Problem-solving sessions*

You meet every two weeks for the first months, then once a month for as long as you choose to meet. You may choose to meet as a single family or in a group. You learn to deal with the problems in a practical, step-by-step approach.

## **Who can benefit from family psychoeducation?**

Families of people diagnosed with schizophrenia or schizoaffective disorder are most likely to benefit. Recently, psychoeducation has been shown to be helpful for people with bipolar disorder, major depression, obsessive compulsive disorder, and borderline personality disorder.

## **How does it help the consumer?**

Over time, when individuals with serious mental illness and their families learn more about the illness and ways to reduce its effects, there can be many positive changes, such as:

- ▶ fewer relapses
- ▶ less time in the hospital
- ▶ a decreased sense of stigma
- ▶ a feeling of better control over life
- ▶ fewer symptoms
- ▶ fewer conflicts about medication
- ▶ less isolation
- ▶ more involvement in family life and social activities
- ▶ better job options
- ▶ less depression and anxiety

## **How do I start?**

Tell the consumer, his/her case manager, or anyone on the treatment team that you are interested in family psychoeducation.

## For more information

Information about family psychoeducation, as well as other evidence-based practices for the treatment of mental illness in the community, can be found at [www.mentalhealthpractices.org](http://www.mentalhealthpractices.org).

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