Helping Families—Shifting the Emphasis

Joanne Nicholson, Ph.D.

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with Karen Albert, M.S., Kathleen Biebel, Ph.D., Bernice Gershenson, M.P.H., Beth R. Hinden, Ph.D., Valerie Williams, M.A., M.S., Brenda Warren, B.S., Chip Wilder, LICSW, Toni Wolf, B.A. & Katherine Woolsey, B.A.

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Today’s Talking Points

• Family members are likely to have multiple and overlapping needs & roles – individuals with mental illness and carers.
• There are many opportunities & strategies for intervention.
• The best care requires the engagement of multiple stakeholders.
A Whole-of-Family Approach: *Families are the focus of mental health promotion, mental illness prevention, treatment and rehabilitation*
Intervention

Parent’s Well-being & Functioning

Child Outcomes

“Old Thinking”
Many Opportunities for Intervention & Support

- Parent Well-being & Functioning
  - Intervention
  - Child Characteristics
  - Intervention

- Family, Stress & Supports
- Child Well-being & Functioning
- Intervention
What does it mean to serve families?

What skills, resources & supports can be put into place to support the optimal functioning of parents & children, & promote positive relationships in times of stability & in anticipation of times of difficulty or crisis?
It takes a village...

- Multigenerational & developmental approach
- Recovery in adults: achieving goals & reducing adverse outcomes
- Resilience in children: supporting strengths & addressing needs

What does it take to create the village? (& not be too overwhelmed...)
Our Work is Informed by Research & Practice

• Survey & ethnographic studies of individuals & families over time
• National surveys & site visit projects
• Development & testing of our own interventions
• Consultation & training to numerous federal, state & local policy makers, providers, consumers & family members
Key Ingredients for Success with Families when Parents have Mental Illnesses

- Family-centered
- Strengths-based
- Trauma-informed
Key Ingredient: Family-Centered

- Integration of adult & child services
- Interagency collaboration
- Funding to meet needs identified by families
Key Ingredient: Strengths-Based

- Non-judgmental approach
- Support of positive role models
Key Ingredient: Trauma-Informed

- Safe environment
- Trustworthy, dependable relationships
- Attend to issues of power & control
Family-centered, strengths-based, trauma-informed practices require a paradigm shift in the way providers view and intervene with individuals.
Leveraging Partnerships to Create & Coordinate Services for Families

• Changing the business we do
• Changing the way we do business
Create New Strategies: Family Options

• Recovery & resilience are family matters (family-centered, trauma-informed)
• Family goal planning based on strengths & needs assessment (strengths-based)
• Family Coaches, Program Director & Clinical Consultant (psych rehab)
• Family team of professional, natural & peer support providers (wraparound)
The Family Options Implementation Study: The Research Question

What does it take to implement an intervention for families in an agency traditionally focused on providing psychiatric rehabilitation services to individual adults?
Implementation Study Themes:

Creating...

- The workforce capacity
- The organizational capacity
- The community capacity
The Workforce Capacity

- Identify skill sets for working with families
  - MH/Child welfare, adults and children, strengths-based, family focused services
- Recruit staff with relevant experience
  - Balance characteristics with credentials
- Educate staff to intervention model
  - Literature, researchers/consultant experts in parental mental illness, site visits
- Develop targeted trainings to address challenges
  - Psychosocial rehab specialists address goal planning with families
The Organizational Capacity

• Develop tools & resources to identify family strengths & goals
  • Family strengths assessment form
  • Family goal form

• Operationalize protocols & procedures
  • Maximize what exists, e.g., petty cash
  • Develop what doesn’t exist, e.g., flex funds

• Facilitate communication pathways among ALL components of agency
  • Internal marketing
  • Resource sharing, information exchange
The Community Capacity

- Locate sustainable resources for families
  - Logistics meetings re: families’ needs and strategies to access services
- Nurture new relationships with community agencies
  - Informational events, kick-off, trainings
- Reinvigorate existing community relationships
  - Reintroductions, face-to-face meetings
- Leverage partnerships to coordinate services for families
  - Team meetings with providers to coordinate and maximize services
Enhance Existing Strategies: provide *family-informed*...

- Supported housing
- Supported employment
- Supported education
- Peer support
- Services for children & youth
Some Final Suggestions:

• Integrate services, coordinate & collaborate.

• Educate colleagues in other disciplines & fields, e.g., primary care, child welfare.

• Engage key stakeholders, e.g., youth & adults, parents & family members, as partners to achieve their goals.
“My children give me strength, they give me hope, they give me the will to survive…”

a mother with mental illness
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