



## **Family as a therapeutic partner**

(Excerpted from *Early Psychosis: A Care Guide*, senior authors Tom Ehmann PhD and Laura Hanson PhD, Mental Health Evaluation & Community Consultation Unit, Department of Psychiatry, University of British Columbia, 2002.)

Despite significant evidence that family involvement leads to lowered relapse rates, improved patient functioning, and enhanced family well-being, delivery of mental health services to persons with psychosis often bypasses the family. Families need support both for themselves and to assist the ill family member. Recognizing the enormous implications to a family when a member develops a psychotic disorder, the alleviation of family disruption should be fostered along with engagement of the family as a therapeutic partner. Most people who are ill do much better with the ongoing help and support of their family. Collaboration between care providers and families should begin immediately, with consideration given to the pace and extent to which a family can participate. Involving families in the therapeutic process benefits both patient outcome and family well-being. Regardless of the patient's age, family involvement should be part of a specific treatment plan rather than informal and as needed. Families should be actively approached and engaged as early as possible. Work with the family should include supportive counselling, psychoeducation, relapse prevention, stress management, and enhancement of coping skills.

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