

Clinical Guidelines for “Just the Facts - Developing Collaboration with Mental Health Professionals”

OVERVIEW:

This handout for this topic is designed to provide participants with key information about how the professional mental health system works, including types of mental health services, types of staff, facilitating communication, issues of confidentiality, and language. Many participants will be new to the system, and while they have an orientation to the NAVIGATE program, they may have had little other opportunity to acquaint themselves with “how the system works”.

Goals

1. Inform participants about the types of mental health services typically available, including staff titles, responsibilities, and organization.
2. Help participants learn why communication is important among everyone on the team, and how sharing of information works.
3. Help participants learn about confidentiality laws.
4. Encourage participants to ask for clarification when they do not understand what is being said to them by professionals.

Materials Needed

Educational handout: Just the Facts - Developing Collaboration with Mental Health Professionals

TEACHING STRATEGIES:

- Before teaching the participant about a specific topic, assess his/her knowledge by asking him/her what he/she knows about the local mental health system.
- Ask who the members of the team are that are serving the client; see what participants know; clarify any inaccuracies.

- The confidentiality laws and issues about sharing information can be daunting; go slow, be prepared to discuss the rationale for laws that may seem harsh.
- Encourage relatives to be creative in how they think about sharing information with staff.
- Role-play asking a staff member for clarification if they are stumped by something the staff member said.
- Consider revisiting issues with the client around sharing information if this has been a problem in this family.

TIPS FOR COMMON PROBLEMS:

- Many participants, especially relatives, will have had some very difficult situations arise pertaining to confidentiality. They many want to “tell their story”; this is fine—just be empathic.
- Likely the experience in NAVIGATE is very different from other mental health experiences the families have had, in terms of attentiveness to relatives’ needs. Acknowledge this, if it is brought up.
- You need to educate the client both about the NAVIGATE program and the rest of the mental health system, since people may graduate or transition out of NAVIGATE at some point. Sometimes participants do not have a good context for this material since they are part of a more richly staffed “first episode clinic” but members often transition off this clinic so the general information in this handout can be reviewed again or delayed for first time review until the transition if that seems more appropriate.

THE MOST IMPORTANT GOAL OF THE SESSION:

Encourage relatives to work closely with the professional mental health team, even when it is challenging.

EVALUATING GAINS:

- You can assess a participant’s knowledge using the following questions:
 1. What are the titles and duties of two people typically on a mental health treatment team? Are there people with these responsibilities on the NAVIGATE team?
 2. If your relative does not consent to an open sharing of information between staff and relatives, how can you get information to the team anyway?