

Quality, Coordinated Health Services

It is important to ensure that families have access to health services responsive to their family member's needs, and to their own. A family-centred approach would include:

- ▀ Being provided with the names and contact information of care team members

Families should know who to call if they need advice or assistance, or if you need help coping. This is an essential component of coordinated care.

- ▀ Having access to a second opinion regarding diagnosis and treatment

As in all branches of medicine, individuals and families have the right to a second opinion.

- ▀ A rapid response in all situations, but especially in emergencies

Every mental health service that provides emergency assistance should be required to do so within a specified time limit, usually four to six hours. When a family feels that their relative is in crisis, that perception needs to be respected by service providers, and responded to in a timely manner.

- ▀ Family support

Optimal treatment for mental illness includes supporting the family or caregiver as well as the person with mental illness. Families should have access to family support organizations, and information to help them cope. Their relative should have access to programs and supports that focus on issues of family life and social relationships.

What To Do if the Family's Expectations are Not Being Met

If families are unhappy with the service they or their relative receives in the mental health system, they have the right to express their dissatisfaction.

For complaints about hospital services, families can speak to the head of the department they are dealing with (emergency, psychiatry, etc.) or they can speak to the hospital's Patient Relations Officer. If the complaint involves a community-based service, they should speak with the person in charge.

Families are entitled to receive a response to their concern. If they are not satisfied with their response, they can take their issue to their local MPP (Member of Provincial Parliament), to the media, or to any other venue they feel will be helpful.

“As we often say, there are really only eight kinds of people affected by mental disorder. It's a very small list, but we all know someone on it: someone's mother, daughter, sister or wife; someone's father, brother, husband or son.”

—Julia Nunes and Scott Simmie
Beyond Crazy, Journeys Through Mental Illness

Contact the Schizophrenia Society of Ontario

We are here to help. The Schizophrenia Society of Ontario (SSO) is a family-based organization that understands what it's like to live with schizophrenia. Our objectives are to:

- ▀ support, educate, engage, and empower families,
- ▀ promote community awareness,
- ▀ advocate on behalf of families affected by schizophrenia,
- ▀ work cooperatively with organizations for allied disorders,
- ▀ support and advocate for relevant research, and
- ▀ promote early intervention.

The SSO has chapters and regional offices across the province to serve you. Please check our website to find the one closest to your community. The more we work together, the more powerful our voice becomes on issues affecting people living with schizophrenia. Help us continue to speak for families by joining the society today.

For further information, please contact us at:

Schizophrenia Society of Ontario
130 Spadina Avenue, Suite 302
Toronto, ON M5V 2L4
Phone: 416-449-6830 or 1-800-449-6367
Fax: 416-449-8434
E-mail: sso@schizophrenia.on.ca
Website: www.schizophrenia.on.ca

Rights and responsibilities in the health care system are subject to federal and provincial legislation. This information should not be used as a substitute for the advice of a professional. Consult a physician or a lawyer to discuss your individual facts and circumstances.

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A REASON TO HOPE. THE MEANS TO COPE.
THE SCHIZOPHRENIA SOCIETY OF ONTARIO
SOCIÉTÉ ONTARIENNE DE LA SCHIZOPHRÉNIE
UNE SOURCE D'ESPOIR, DE SOUTIEN ET D'ENTRAÏDE.

Families as Partners in Care

A family-centred approach to mental health care



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We define family as caring relationships between people with schizophrenia, their relatives, friends, and other individuals in a supportive capacity.

Partners in Care

Mental illness affects us all, especially when it hits close to home... when a family member becomes ill. Families play a crucial role in supporting their relative with severe mental illness, often serving as caregivers and making up their core support system.

If you are a family member in this situation, you need to be supported as well. As you find yourself interacting with hospitals, psychiatrists, nurses, family physicians, outpatient clinics, assertive community treatment (ACT) teams, and case managers, you need to be recognized as an integral part of your family member's care and recovery.

The Schizophrenia Society of Ontario advocates for a family-centred approach to treatment, the goal of which is to ensure that your loved one receives the best possible treatment and care.

The following is a description of what we envision a family-centred approach to include:

Information and Respect

At every touchpoint in the mental health system, families should:

▮ Be treated with understanding and respect

This is the foundation upon which a family member's care plan will be built, and a basic right in dealing with health service professionals.

▮ Experience respect for diverse backgrounds and value systems

Mental health services should respect diversity. A family's cultural, religious, and social background should be taken into consideration, and their respective needs, such as language, should be addressed.

▮ Have access to general information about mental illness, treatment and coping strategies

It is important that families have access to information about mental illness in general and strategies for coping, whether or not their relative has consented to disclosure of specific information about their diagnosis and treatment.

Family Involvement

As a cornerstone in the care of their relative, families should have access to services that meaningfully include them as part of the treatment team. Research shows that when this happens, a person with mental illness has better care and outcomes.

A family-centred approach would include:

▮ Involvement in treatment planning, implementation and review

Families should work together with mental health professionals to develop a plan that includes goals for treatment, care and recovery that everyone agrees with and understands. As needs change over time, families should be included in reviewing plans.

▮ The opportunity to provide relevant information about a family member's history in confidence

Families can provide valuable information to health care practitioners and advise on matters relating to their relative's treatment. If confidentiality is requested, that should be respected, just as a professional would

maintain discretion when consulting with another professional.

▮ Being taken seriously when expressing concerns about changes in a person's behaviour

It is important that family concerns not be ignored or avoided by mental health professionals. Families should be able to clearly communicate with practitioners and have open, honest, effective discussions.

▮ Being consulted about a family member's discharge plan

Hospital discharge plans should be developed in partnership with the family and other caregivers. Information about discharge is vital to families, particularly when the plan relies on their support to ensure continuity of care and follow-up.

▮ Participating in the shaping of mental health services in the community

Family experience and advice is a valuable resource that should be used by mental health service planners to improve treatment and care. The family voice should be heard.