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RELIAS | LEARNING



Relias Spotlight Series

December 2022

Hello Providers,

Welcome to the Optum Idaho **December Relias Spotlight Series** — a series devoted to offering you access to **free, accessible and continuing education unit-eligible** online education about topics that are important to behavioral health providers. This month, we are highlighting how providers can support caregivers to be allies to their family members who may have mental health conditions.

Mental healthcare providers can play a big role in assisting and providing support for caregivers and families with mental health challenges. They educate people about practicing good mental hygiene, which includes learning and using healthy coping mechanisms, knowing how to identify and avoid unhealthy coping strategies and managing stress and bad moods. They also support people in how to make lifestyle changes to improve and maintain good mental health.

Family members and caregivers often play a large role in helping and supporting the millions of people in the U.S. who experience mental health conditions each year. Family members need the support and guidance of a knowledgeable treatment team in this uncertain, stressful period of life. At the same time, their loved ones who are struggling with mental health conditions need meaningful participation from their families to help them achieve lasting recovery. Regardless of the member's age, engaging loved ones in assessment, education, family therapy and discharge planning is valuable.

Family support is equally important in adult members, although involvement can be a bit more complicated. "Family" is more loosely defined for adults — family can mean a spouse, significant other, adult child (if appropriate/clinically indicated), parent(s) or even a trusted friend. Because adults have different kinds of meaningful relationships, the basic criteria for participation in the treatment process is consent, and a commitment to be involved in their loved one's recovery. Regardless of the age of the member, a treatment approach that engages, educates and encourages families is important to empower them to do whatever is needed to support the member in the areas they are struggling.

Family involvement in treatment does not only include family therapy and mending connections, but also educating families about these complex illnesses and their role in the treatment process, as well as engaging them in both the assessment and discharge planning phases of treatment. As mental healthcare providers, it is beneficial to be aware some families come into treatment knowing very little about behavioral health disorders, while others know a great deal (much of which can be inaccurate or counterproductive information). At a basic and fundamental level, families want to know what has happened to their loved one, what to expect moving forward and how they can help. They also want to know why their loved one is struggling with issues, be it eating disorders, depressed mood, crippling anxiety, co-occurring substance abuse or other conditions.

As clinicians, it is important to carefully avoid the notion of blame. It is critical for the treatment team to reiterate there is no single cause of these disorders and to educate families about the factors that contribute to the development of these mental health concerns — biological, genetic, personality or temperament, developmental functioning, environmental pressures (family, school, peer and sociocultural pressures). When combined with a developmental transition, life event or traumatic experience, these factors can trigger troubling symptoms and behaviors.

Another important aspect of supporting caregivers as a provider is by helping caregivers to be prepared for a crisis. A Wellness Recovery Action Plan can be very helpful for members and their families to plan for their overall care and tools on how to avoid a crisis. Providers can help members and their family develop a plan and include the following information:

- Phone numbers for the member's therapist, psychiatrist and other healthcare providers
- Family members and friends who would be helpful, and local crisis line phone number
- Phone numbers of family members or friends who would be helpful in a crisis
- Addresses of walk-in crisis centers or emergency rooms
- The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 988

- Caregiver’s address and phone number(s)
- Member’s diagnosis and medications
- Previous psychosis or suicide attempts
- History of drug use
- Triggers
- Things that have helped in the past
- Mobile Crisis Unit phone number in the area (if there is one)
- Determine if police officer in the community have Crisis Intervention Training (CIT)

If you would like more information and education around the topic of family engagement and how to help caregivers in their role as a mental health ally, we encourage you to log into [Relias](#) and search for the following modules:

Care for Caregivers: Supporting Individuals that are Supporting Others	REL-BHC-0-CCSISO
Overview of Family Assessment and Intervention	REL-BHC-0-OFAI
Overview of Family Therapy	REL-BHC-0-OFT
Engaging Families in Crisis Planning	REL-BHC-0-EFMCP
Evidence-Based Practices in Family Psychoeducation	REL-BHC-0-EBPFP
Strengths Based Approach in Working with At-Risk Youth	REL-HHS-0-WYSBP-V2

For additional resources to assist with providing support to caregivers in their efforts to be positive and stable support systems and mental health allies to their loved ones with mental health conditions, please see the links listed below.

[Family Members and Caregivers | NAMI: National Alliance on Mental Illness](#)

[For Friends and Family Members | MentalHealth.gov](#)

[Mental Health Resources for Caregivers | Mental Health America \(mhanational.org\)](#)

Thank you again for the work you do each day with our members so Idaho can continue to improve access to behavioral health services. Optum Idaho is excited to offer these resources to you.

Sincerely,

The Optum Education and Training team