

Unit Name: BC Schizophrenia Society, Prince George

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QUALITY IMPROVEMENT STORY BOARD



northern health
the northern way of caring

F.A.M.I.L.I.E.S.™

(Family Alliance on Mental Illness-Leaders in Involvement, Empowerment & Support)

Background:

The BC Schizophrenia Society is contracted by Northern Health to provide peer support and education to ALL family members affected by ANY mental illness. In 2010, the Mental Health Commission of Canada identified the opportunity to *transform* the mental health system through the integration and promotion of peer [family] support.



Objective:

Issue: National PSC Certification standards for Peer Supporter practice exist but need to be implemented for improved care.

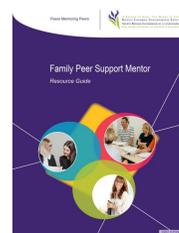
Goal: Provide training in national standards of practice to prepare experienced family peer supporters for National PSC Certification.

Measures: Improved consistency of care and regional capacity building.

Current State:

Current inconsistency of practice among Family Peer Supporters is of concern for those with mental illness and/or addiction and their families. A Canadian pilot in PSC national standards, the *FAMILIES™ Peer Specialist and FAMILIES™ in Residence* case study, demonstrated the benefits of achieving national standards of practice in the journey of adaptation to the trauma of mental illness. It was included in the *Best Advice Guide: Engaging [Family] Caregivers* published by the Mental Health Commission of Canada in fall 2019. The Guide is administered to healthcare providers to help involve family caregivers in recognition of the crucial role they play in fostering recovery.

FAMILIES™ Peer Specialists have provided family peer support services in northern communities since 1997. Today, FAMILIES™ in Residence now also work in acute psychiatric settings across the north (Prince George, Quesnel, Terrace, Dawson Creek).



Solution:



Peer Support Canada was created to carry on the work started by the MHCC, promoting the growth, recognition, and accessibility of peer support. PSC developed a robust certification process for Family Peer Supporters that are grounded in national standards of practice.

FAMILIES™ saw an opportunity to adopt national standards of practice and further engage family caregivers with the PSC certification process. This included measurement and evaluation of Family Peer Supporters' experience, knowledge and competencies including interpersonal relations, demeanor, communication, critical thinking, hope, self-management and resiliency, flexibility and adaptability, self-awareness and confidence, initiative and commitment, teamwork, plus continuous learning and development.

FAMILIES™ identified the need to translate their knowledge and share their experience to build competency and capacity among upcoming family peer supporters. The first step was to develop training based on the MHCC 2014 *Guidelines for the Practice and Training of Peer Support*, the PSC knowledge matrix and their 2016 *National Certification Handbook* as a foundation for implementing Family Peer Supporter training across the region.

Results:

FAMILIES™ Peer Specialists completed a four-year PSC certification process in 2018 to become the first team of certified Family Peer Supporters in Canada. Two Family Peer Supporters and a Family Peer Support Mentor in the B.C. Northern Interior have successfully demonstrated national standards of practice for more consistent and improved care.

FAMILIES™ has completed two of three training guides. The first is the *Family Peer Supporter* training guide for participants. The second is the *Family Peer Support Mentor* resource guide for teachers. The third guide *Family Peer Support Mentor Leader* (train the trainer) is scheduled for completion in 2020.

Next steps / Sustaining the Gains:

FAMILIES™ to continue its vision providing training and encouraging national standards of practice among Family Peer Supporters.

FAMILIES™ to continue knowledge translation with completion of the *Family Peer Support Mentor Leader* guide (train the trainer).

FAMILIES™ to conduct "train the trainer" using the third guide to facilitate capacity building and sustain national standards of practice among family peer supporters.

Patient/Customer:

FAMILIES™ conducted two pilot training events (Terrace June 2017, Prince George November 2019) using the new training guides to receive feedback from family members, further improving the program.

FAMILIES™ now works in both the community and in acute settings fostering recovery among patients and effectively supporting providers in the continuum of care. FAMILIES™ is also exploring the possibility of working in tertiary settings by 2020.



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