

FAMILIES OF PERSONS WITH MENTAL HEALTH CONDITIONS*

Judith R. Mathews, PhD, MPH
Child Psychologist
Volunteer for NAMI

* With thanks to NAMI Maryland

FAMILIES ARE OFTEN CAREGIVERS OF LAST RESORT

- No training or information on mental illness
- 65% of patients are released from hospital to families

HOW MENTAL ILLNESS AFFECTS THE FAMILY

- ◉ Disrupts family routine
- ◉ Life is unpredictable
- ◉ Stigma can leave the family isolated

HOW MENTAL ILLNESS AFFECTS THE FAMILY

- ⊙ Often do not have adequate information:
 - HIPPA restrictions
 - Poor communication
- ⊙ Consequences of unusual behavior:
 - Consumer may have few friends
 - Family: Fear, insomnia
 - Family: Eviction

HOW MENTAL ILLNESS AFFECTS THE FAMILY

◉ STAGES OF EMOTIONAL REACTION

- DEALING WITH CATASTROPHIC EVENT

- Crisis, shock
- Denial
- Hope against hop

- LEARNING TO COPE

- Anger /guilt / resentment
- Recognition
- Grief

HOW MENTAL ILLNESS AFFECTS THE FAMILY

◎ STAGES OF EMOTIONAL REACTION:

- MOVING TO ADVOCACY
 - Understanding
 - Acceptance
 - Advocacy

FAMILIES WAIT TO CALL 911

- Call when feel out of control
- May be sleep deprived
- Fight or flight mode

WHAT CONSTITUTES A “CRISIS” TO FAMILIES?

- ◉ Told to call 911 by professionals / friends
- ◉ Feel person is out of control or escalating
- ◉ Prevention: recognize signs of relapse
- ◉ **GOAL = GET HELP FOR PERSON**

EFFECT OF FAMILY WHEN POLICE ARRIVE

- Frustration, anger, fear, guilt, shame
- What will neighbors think?



HOW CAN FAMILIES HELP YOU?

○ **Person's history**

- Meds & treatment
- Substance Use
- History of violence
- Triggers that set them off

HOW CAN FAMILIES HELP YOU?

○ **Ways to Handle Current Crisis**

- How to communicate with the person
- How to de-escalate the person

WHAT CAN YOU DO FOR THE FAMILY?

- ◉ Check on their status during crisis
- ◉ Ask if they have support & someone they can call
- ◉ Provide info:
 - NAMI
 - Other resources

RECOMMENDATIONS

- DON'T JUDGE A BOOK BY ITS COVER

- DE-ESCALATE

- Person with mental health condition may be agitated
- Loved ones may be in a state of fight-or-flight

RECOMMENDATIONS

◉ DE-ESCALATE

- Person with mental health condition may be agitated
- Loved ones may be in a state of fight-or-flight

◉ PROVIDE RESOURCES

- Crisis Info
- NAMI

◉ **BE RESPECTFUL**

SCENARIOS

FAMILY CALLS 911

1. Child is aggressive
2. Young adult has gun and has threatened to kill self or commit suicide by cop
3. Adult is pacing & they feel unsafe

FAMILY CALLS 911

5. Child is not minding
6. Adult jumps out of car and refuses to get back into the car
7. Suicidal youth with high anxiety refuses to get into police car to go to hospital

POLICE ENCOUNTER ADULT WITH MENTAL HEALTH CONDITION

1. Man is wander the streets pointing at the sky and disregarding traffic
2. Homeless man is being taunted by a group of youth
3. Man who is being locked up asks for anxiety medication

POLICE ENCOUNTER ADULT WITH MENTAL HEALTH CONDITION

4. Man is released from hospital after being taken by police for a psych assessment
5. Man who is acting strangely tells police they are demons and he has been told by God to kill them.