

Wellways practice framework: Working with families

For many people with a mental health issue, families provide the sustained emotional, practical and financial support that is critical to recovery. Parents, siblings, children, partners, members of the extended family and friends often take on a range of support roles that can impact on their own wellbeing. In addition to this, people with mental health issues may also need support in their own roles within the family, especially as parents.

1.1 Wellways principles in working with families

We will:

- acknowledge families as having a critical role in supporting and sustaining the recovery process
- ensure that families are provided with effective education and support
- work to engage with, and involve, families at all stages of decision making and support processes
- prioritise the needs of vulnerable children by ensuring that a parent or carer with a mental health issue is well supported in their parenting role and that children are provided with appropriate support and resources.

1.2 Evidence base for the Wellways approach to work with families

Families affected by mental health issues may experience disruption and stress in relationships, high levels of depression and anxiety, social isolation and feelings of fear, worry and guilt. For a person affected by mental health issues, recovery is enhanced when the whole family is knowledgeable, skilled, resilient and well supported. Families providing care need information, skills, resources and development that enable them to overcome exclusionary factors and to provide informed, assertive and sustainable support (Farnan, 2011).

It is particularly important to recognise that many people with mental illness are also parents, and that a whole-of-family approach should be taken to ensure that the needs of dependent children are met and to support the parenting role.

1.3 Features of the Wellways approach to working with families

Wellways will:

- offer evidence based, effective family education through our Wellways peer education programs
- identify families where children are vulnerable and work in partnership with specialist services to ensure children receive appropriate and timely support, while also providing information and support to parents and carers
- offer programs with a focus on connecting or reconnecting families as a key element in supporting recovery
- take a flexible and responsive approach to working with families of multicultural people and/or Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander backgrounds, including culturally-appropriate approaches to providing information and support and engaging families in planning and decision making
- take a whole of organisation approach to family-centred practice that includes engaging carers and families in the development, planning and evaluation of services and training staff in family sensitive practice.

1.4 References

Farnan, S. (2011). Well Ways Family Education: for families and carers of people with a mental illness. New Paradigm Summer, pp. 6-14.

Community Recovery Model

People affected by mental health issues have the right to create a good life by making a home, engaging in meaningful work or learning, and building good relationships with friends, family and people in their community.

The Wellway's Community Recovery Model recognises that real and lasting recovery does not occur in isolation, and can be best achieved by working at three levels to:

- promote recovery and positive change for people with mental health issues
- assist families and friends in building resilience
- create welcoming communities.



Family and friends

- We understand mental health issues
- We know what helps recovery
- We look after our own wellbeing

Individual

- I can take charge of my life
- I feel connected to people
- I am part of my community

Community

- We include people with mental health issues
- We stand up for equal rights
- We create opportunities for people