

The challenges

Mental health professionals face many challenges when working with families, often stating:

- *'I don't know what I'm legally allowed to tell families and carers*
- *The family is the problem*
- *I'm not a trained family therapist*
- *Sometimes I feel like families and carers treat us like the enemy*
- *I don't have the time to deal with families*
- *It's not part of my job description/accountabilities*
- *The consumer said that he/she didn't want their family involved*
- *It's ok to say we should include families but we don't have the funding or resources to do this*
- *Dealing with families is yet another task and they often just get in the way.'*

Benefits for staff

This training will increase understanding of:

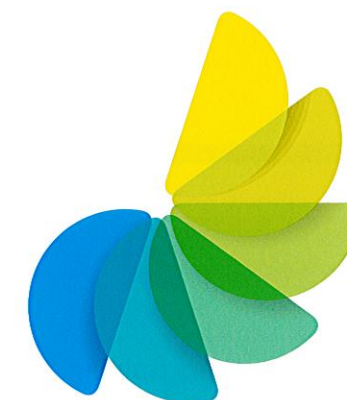
- What carers want and need from mental health professionals
- How to maximise the relationship with carers
- Legal responsibilities - what information can/cannot be shared
- Tactics to de-escalate difficult behaviours, especially when the family is in crisis
- Supports available for carers

Contact details:

To learn more about the training modules contact:

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representing Victorian
mental health carers

Families as Partners

training for mental health professionals

**better mental health
involves everyone.**

The program

Families as Partners training has been developed to equip mental health staff to identify, engage, involve and support families and carers of people experiencing a mental illness or emotional distress.

It enables mental health staff to provide carers and families with the practical information, skills and understanding they need.

This training also assists mental health professionals to support families and carers with their own health and wellbeing.

The training covers:

- The evidence base for involving families and carers
- Understanding the impact of mental illness on families and carers
- Managing communication with families and carers
- Helping families and carers manage behaviours of concern
- Ethical and legal issues including privacy and confidentiality issues
- The role of families and carers in recovery

Why our training is different

Tandem is the peak body representing the diverse voices of Victorian families and carers of people who are experiencing mental illness or emotional distress.

The Families as Partners training program is based on the lived experience of family and carers.

We have synthesised our years of research of working with families and carers to identify the key areas that they would like mental health professionals to support them with.

New directions

It is well established that active involvement of the family/carer in the provision of psychiatric treatment substantially improves prognostic outcomes in the disorder. A rationale for this must be provided so all parties understand why information sharing is important.

National and state legislation and policies increasingly recognise the valuable role played by carers of people with mental health issues.

Lived Experience

The lived experience of families and carers can be used as a key asset in assisting mental health professionals in the recovery process of their family member/friend.

Research evidence* shows that involving carers in treatment can:

- Reduce relapse rates of up to 20% through earlier detection of symptoms and earlier intervention
- Result in significant cost savings for the health system by decreasing treatment costs, through better adherence to medication, improved social functioning and fewer acute admissions
- Reduce the burden experienced by carers
- Improve relationships between family members
- Enhance job satisfaction for staff

* Reference: Pharoah F. et al Family intervention for schizophrenia. *Cochrane Database of Systemic Reviews*, 4, 2006.