Family Support for Behavioral Health Across the Lifespan: A 3-Part Learning Series

Session 2: How to Support Children Who Experience Mental Health and/or Substance Use Challenges

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Disclaimer

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Co-occurring Diagnoses

How do caregivers navigate co-occurring diagnoses across their child’s lifespan?

• Co-occurring disorders: having a substance use and mental health disorder at the same time (i.e., dual diagnosis, comorbid)

• 30-45% of adolescents and young adults with a mental health disorder have a co-occurring substance use disorder

• 65% or more youth with a substance use disorder also have a mental health disorder
Refresher on 3-part framework: My Roles As a Caregiver

• How do I recognize what my child needs?
  • The Observing Caregiver

• How do I stay connected to my child?
  • The Relational Caregiver

• How do I take care of myself too?
  • The Self-Caring Caregiver
Grieving: What it means to receive a diagnosis for your child

• In the present moment, what burdens and limitations might a child’s diagnosis bring up?

• Looking towards the future, what concerns/anxieties emerge related to potentially foreclosed possibilities?

• How can the stages of grief inform how a caregiver navigates the new and ongoing nature of a diagnosis?
Management and Treatment: How to get needs met on multiple diagnoses

• The two diagnoses are likely to reinforce and exacerbate one another

• It can be helpful to seek out providers who can treat both diagnoses or who are willing to help coordinate services across providers/systems

• Depending on the situation, you may have to juggle decisions about medication vs. behavioral treatments, or a combination of both
Ages 0-11 Years:

• When you find out (as a caregiver) that you have a child being officially diagnosed, what comes up? How can you manage any sense of loss that you may imagine based on hopes/milestones in your child’s future?

• How have you experienced gender having an impact on your child’s diagnosis?

Ages 12-18 Years:

• How can you maintain connection with your child so that you’re able to recognize symptoms of anxiety, depression, and/or potential self-medication?

• How much time spent alone in one’s room or playing video games is too much? When might it indicate depression or something else going on?

• How can you navigate the treatment system as your child gets older and they may not require your consent?

Ages 19-25 Years:

• How do caregivers manage a child’s transition from adolescence to adulthood, when they may no longer have access to details of care (treatment progress, medication, etc.)

• How can you allow your young adult to have space and autonomy, while also staying connected in a meaningful way?

Ages 26 & Older:

• How do HIPAA laws impact caregivers as they attempt to remain supportive to adult children?
Let’s Talk

• What were the major takeaways from breakout rooms?
• What is developmentally unique across age groups?
• What are core elements of the caregiver experience that cut across the entire lifespan?
Follow Up and Next Steps

In our follow up email, within 3 – 5 business days, look for:

• A link to the recording of today’s presentation
• Today’s presentation slides
• Invitations to upcoming events
• Additional resources
• Ways to stay connected with us
• A letter of participation for your records

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