A PRACTICAL GUIDE
FOR WORKING WITH CARERS
OF PEOPLE WITH A MENTAL ILLNESS

AMHOIC 2017

Dr Sarah Pollock, Mind Australia Limited for
Jenny Branton, Executive Officer, MHCA
Who are we?

Mental Health Carers Australia is the only national advocacy group solely concerned with the well-being and promotion of mental health carer needs.
Mental Health Carers Australia has grown out of the national grassroots movement of ARAFMI organisations across Australia. *Originally ARAFMI was an acronym for Association of Relatives And Friends of the Mentally Ill.*

The first ARAFMI group was formed in Sydney in 1975.
Lately we have been refining our strategic intent and exploring options to broaden our member base.

Our focus is on:

- Influencing systemic change in government policy and service provider practice
- Improving carer support and reducing stigma

A Practical Guide to Working with Carers of People with a Mental Illness is a tool to achieve both.
Why engage with Mental Health Carers?
The Australian Policy Context

The Statement for Australia’s Carers

Carer Recognition Act 2010

“Carers should be considered as partners with other care providers in the provision of care, acknowledging the unique knowledge and experience of carers”
National Mental Health Standards 2010, Standard 7

“The Mental Health Service recognises, respects, values and supports the importance of carers to the wellbeing, treatment and recovery of people with a mental illness”.
National Safety and Quality Health Service Standards 2012, Standard 2

“Leaders of a health service organisation implement systems to support partnering with patients, carers and other consumers to improve the safety and quality of care”.
In 2013, the Federal Government committed to the adoption of a Recovery Framework for service delivery.

Recovery-oriented practice and service delivery recognises the unique role of personal and family relationships in promoting wellbeing, providing care, and fostering recovery across the life span, and recognises the needs of families and support givers themselves.
Yet the experience of carers is that the policy does not generally translate to practice.
But what about self determination and confidentiality????
The Guide was Created by a consortium of experts in mental health care, including HelpingMinds, Mind Australia, Private Mental Health Consumer Carer Network (Australia), Mental Health Australia and Mental Health Carers Australia.
A PRACTICAL GUIDE
FOR WORKING WITH CARERS
OF PEOPLE WITH A MENTAL ILLNESS

Recovery-oriented practice and service delivery recognises the unique role of personal and family relationships in promoting wellbeing, providing care, and fostering recovery across the life span, and recognises the needs of families and support givers themselves
Diagram: Individual treatment model
The **consumer**, who is living the experience of the illness and wants to move to recovery. They are experts by experience.

The **service providers**, across all settings, who have knowledge through their training and experience and a commitment to an improved outcome for the consumer.

The **carers**, who have the main responsibility for care when service providers are not there. They are frequently faced with providing care to consumers who are acutely unwell. They are also experts by experience.
The Six Partnership Standards

1. Carers and the essential role they play are identified at first contact, or as soon as possible thereafter.
2. Staff are carer aware and trained in carer engagement strategies.
3. Policy and practice protocols regarding confidentiality and sharing of information are in place.
4. Defined staff positions are allocated for carers in all service settings.
5. A carer introduction to the service and staff is available, with a relevant range of information across the care settings.
6. A range of carer support services is available.
**Self Assessment Tool: Standard 1**

**Partnership Standard 1:**
Carers and the essential role they play are identified at first contact, or as soon as possible thereafter.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activities</th>
<th>R</th>
<th>O</th>
<th>G</th>
<th>Action Plan</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.1 Carers are routinely identified when carrying out an assessment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2 Special circumstances of the carers are recorded, for example:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- parent of young family</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- single parent</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- caring for parents</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- young carer</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- carer with mental illness</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- friend</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- partner</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- relative</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.3 Carers views and knowledge are sought throughout the assessment and ongoing support process</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.4 Consent of consumer is routinely obtained and recorded re: carers involvement</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.5 Carers are regularly updated and involved re: care plans</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.6 Strategies for medication management are explained to the carers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.7 Carers have access to advice re: advocacy, rights, information and support</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.8 There is a documented procedure for welcoming carers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.9 Carers are involved in the discharge process</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- **Red** indicates significant under-performance and a need to develop action plans for improvement.
- **Orange** indicates achievement of the activity some of the time but that improvement is required.
- **Green** indicates positive achievement of the activity the majority of the time.
what management strategies have worked in the past
the impact of medication.

Remember: carers have known the consumer when he/she was well.
You may have only met the consumer since he/she became unwell.
It is likely that a better outcome will be achieved if all parties work as partners in care.

Examples of questions you might ask the consumer to support identification of the carers:

- Who do you rely on?
- Who worries about you the most?
- Who helps you the most?
- Does anyone take you shopping or help you with banking on a regular basis?
- Do you have any family or friends who you would feel comfortable asking for help?

Early and ongoing involvement of carers will assist accurate assessment and influence ongoing care.

Carer Nomination Form (see Appendix 1)
The inclusion of a carer nomination form as a regular part of all documentation acts as a reminder for you throughout all stages of care that it should be completed and updated on a regular basis. A discussion with the consumer regarding the identification of carers provides an opportunity for the importance of a partnership approach to care to be reinforced.
Outcomes for Carers

🌟 Peace of mind that the person they care for is receiving the best and appropriate treatment possible.
🌟 Reduced stress and associated poor health
🌟 Improved capacity to continue in caring role
🌟 Improved capacity to make decisions about their caring role

“I cried when a staff member said ‘Are you John’s mother? How are you going’?

“After 20 years, I can now share the information I have, and together we are slowly working towards recovery - for all the family”

A mother’s comments during consultation when developing the Guide
Outcomes for Providers

- A fuller picture of the consumers needs and behaviour
- Compliance with national state and territory legislation and policy
- Meet various accreditation requirements
- Improved staff satisfaction
Outcomes for consumers

- More comprehensive care, support and treatment regime
- Continuity before and after accessing a service
- Improved health and recovery outcomes
- Improved staff satisfaction
The Guide is designed as a tool organisations can use without the need of external facilitation. It can be implemented as a whole or broken down to the standards an organisation identifies as priorities.

Support for implementation

- Demonstration projects
- Web site- workingwithfamilies.com.au
Questions