



COUNTY-LEVEL FAMILY SUPPORTS & SERVICES

Schizophrenia spectrum and other psychotic disorders affect not only the individuals diagnosed, but their families as well. Family members often find themselves in the roles of caregivers, advocates, and emotional supporters, which can lead to the need for their own support. In turn, well-supported family members are better able to support relatives with a serious mental illness.

Recognizing this, county behavioral health (BH) agencies have developed various programs and services specifically tailored to assist families. The following is an overview of the various family support services which can be provided at the county level. It may not be possible for a county BH agency to offer every possible service and support. Rather, the supports and services below can serve as a menu of options. County BH leadership and staff should assess the family needs in their county, available staff, and community-based organizations that could provide support.

To find resources in each county, access the [county directory](#) on the CARE Act Resource Center. It shows counties with active CARE websites and links to Self-Help Centers and the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI).

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Education Services

Education services refer to workshops, seminars, informational pamphlets, or other methods of communicating information. Such services can benefit individuals with a family member participating in the CARE process by helping them better understand their relative's disease. Topics could include:

- » **Schizophrenia Spectrum and Other Psychotic Disorders:** Details information on symptoms, treatment options, and how to manage the condition. Family psychoeducation (FPE) is a common educational intervention for learning about schizophrenia spectrum and other psychotic disorders.
- » **Treatments:** Provides information about psychiatric medications, types of psychotherapy, communication strategies, de-escalation techniques, and methods for managing stress.
- » **Benefits and Entitlements:** Provides guidance on applying for disability benefits, insurance, entitlements, and other financial support.
- » **Legal Advice:** Includes guidance on legal matters such as guardianship, power of attorney, and patients' rights.

Support Services

Support refers to support groups, connections to programs and therapies, or other methods. Support services can help families by connecting them to resources that can sustain their well-being as they aid relatives in the CARE process. Support could include:

- » **County-Led Family Support Groups:**
 - **Family Support Groups:** Connects families facing similar challenges to provide emotional support, share experiences, and offer practical advice.
 - **Peer Support Groups:** Allows family members to discuss their feelings and experiences with peers who understand their situations.
 - **Online Support Groups and Forums:** Provides virtual communities in which family members can seek advice and support from others dealing with similar circumstances.
- » **Temporary Relief Services:** Provides respite care or temporary relief for caregivers by taking over their caregiving responsibilities for a short time period, allowing them to rest and recharge.

- » **Day Programs:** Includes structured programs that provide social interaction, skill-building activities, and therapeutic services for individuals with schizophrenia spectrum and other psychotic disorders, giving family members a break.
- » **Family Therapy:** Involves counseling sessions with multiple family members present. Intended to improve communication, resolve conflicts, and strengthen family relationships.
- » **Mobile Crisis Teams:** Incorporates mobile teams that can provide on-site support and intervention during psychiatric crises.
- » **Community-Based Organizations:** Connects families to local organizations (e.g., NAMI) which can provide additional support and services.

Care Management/Navigation

Care management and navigation refer to service connection, case management, navigation services, and other methods. These can support families in coordinating, managing, and guiding relatives in the CARE process. Care management and navigation could include:

- » **Service Connection:** Involves connections to services for health-related social needs (e.g., transportation, housing).
- » **Case Management:** Provides oversight and coordination of services and resources provided to individuals. Typically involves a designated case manager who works closely with the participant to assess their needs, develop a customized plan of care, and ensure services are accessed and delivered.
- » **Family Navigation Services:** Includes guiding individuals and families through complex systems or processes to help them access services and resources. May involve providing information, assistance, and support with completing necessary paperwork and navigating barriers to services.
- » **24/7 Crisis Hotlines:** Provides immediate support during emergencies, which can be crucial for both the person with schizophrenia spectrum or other psychotic disorders and their family members.

Family Caregiver Assessment

A family caregiver assessment is an evaluation process aimed at understanding the needs, challenges, and strengths of family members who provide care for individuals with chronic illnesses, disabilities, or mental health conditions. The goal is to identify the support required by these family caregivers to maintain their well-being and effectiveness in their caregiving roles. For families with a relative in the CARE process, a family caregiver assessment serves as a valuable tool for nurturing a positive environment, ensuring they receive needed assistance and can continue to support their family member.

Key components of a family caregiver assessment include:

- » **Caregiver's Health and Well-Being:** Evaluating the physical and mental health of the caregiver, including stress levels, emotional strain, and any health conditions that may impact their ability to provide care.
- » **Caregiving Tasks and Burden:** Assessing the specific tasks the caregiver performs, the time and effort involved, and the overall burden of caregiving responsibilities.
- » **Support Systems:** Identifying the caregiver's access to support, including family, friends, community resources, and professional services.
- » **Training and Knowledge:** Determining the caregiver's understanding of the participant's condition and whether additional training or education is needed.
- » **Financial Impact:** Evaluating the financial strain associated with caregiving, including costs of care, lost income, and access to financial assistance.
- » **Respite and Relief:** Assessing the caregiver's need for breaks, respite care, and other forms of relief to prevent burnout.
- » **Emotional and Social Support:** Understanding the caregiver's need for emotional support, counseling, and opportunities for social engagement.

The assessment typically involves structured interviews, questionnaires, and sometimes direct observation. It may be conducted by social workers, health care providers, or other professionals within county BH agencies or caregiver support organizations. The information gathered is used to develop personalized support plans that may include respite care, counseling, educational resources, financial assistance, and other services to

help caregivers manage their responsibilities and maintain their own well-being. Family caregiver assessment services provided by counties could include:

- » **Structured Interviews:** Involves a systematic and standardized approach to gathering information from caregivers to assess their needs, challenges, and resources. Typically involves structured questions, active listening, documentation, and follow-up meetings as needed.
- » **Assessment Tools:** Utilizes various tools to gather comprehensive information from caregivers. Examples of evidence-based tools include the Caregiver Burden Scale, Zarit Burden Interview, Caregiver Strain Index, and Quality of Life Scale for Caregivers. The choice of tool used generally depends on the specific needs of the individual and family.

Outcomes Studies

Outcomes studies refer to satisfaction surveys, outcome analyses, and other methods. For families with a relative in the CARE process, outcomes studies can play a role in improving quality of care and services and ultimately lead to better outcomes and experiences for all involved. Outcomes studies could include:

- » **Family Satisfaction Surveys:** Gathers feedback from families about the services they receive. Typically used by county BH agencies to improve services to better support families dealing with schizophrenia spectrum and other psychotic disorders. These surveys help assess service accessibility, quality, effectiveness, communication, support and resources, and overall experience.
- » **Outcomes Analysis:** Includes a systematic process used to evaluate the results and effectiveness of programs, treatments, or interventions. In the context of behavioral health services, it involves assessing how well these services achieve their intended goals and impact the well-being of individuals and families. Key components of outcomes analysis include goal setting, data collection, evaluation, reporting, and continuous improvement.