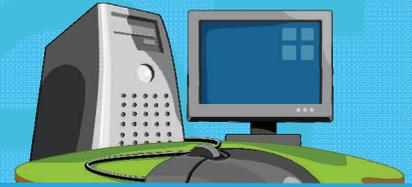


# Webinar Summaries



September 2017

Hearing from “the experts” through interactive, web-based events

## Promising and established practices for family caregiver engagement: Three perspectives on Family Support : A rural perspective - Council of Consumer/Survivor Family initiative

*The Family Caregiver Community of Interest hosted a three-part webinar series to identify and share promising and established practices for family caregiver engagement across Ontario. The following is a summary of “A rural perspective—Council of Consumer/Survivor Family initiative,” presented by Valerie Kitchen, Canadian Mental Health Association – Muskoka-Parry Sound, one component of the second webinar titled “Three Perspectives on Family support”.*

### What is the Council of Consumer/Survivor Family initiative (C.O.I)?

The [Council of Consumer/Survivor Family initiative \(C.O.I\)](#) program, through the Canadian Mental Health Association, Muskoka-Parry Sound Branch, provides peer support and knowledge to consumers/survivors living with mental health issues as well and their family members. This initiative aims to provide networking opportunities, education, and support for family members in the district to reduce

stigma and increase understanding of the issues they face.

### What types of services does the initiative include?

Three peer-driven and peer-guided support and wellness groups are available in Sundridge, Huntsville, and Bracebridge. Support and education is provided to family members and caregivers in a non-judgmental environment. Family members often decide what topics they would like to discuss, such as having a healthy support system in place, wellness tools, coping skills, and setting relationship boundaries. Each group is structured to meet the needs of the family members attending and accepts and

respects where the family members are in their wellness journey. C.O.I coordinators who have lived experience as consumers/survivors and/or as family members facilitate these groups.

## What are the challenges to implementing this program in a rural setting? How did the program address them?

Providing support to families in a rural setting with a large geography can have many challenges. Family members involved in the initiatives have identified the following challenges:

*Lack of available care* – Childcare or respite care can be challenging to find, and is not always affordable or reliable. This can prevent family members from attending group sessions.

*Stigma* – Some participants worry about the stigma they might experience if someone recognizes them while attending a group session in the CMHA offices.

*Transportation* – The cost and time required for transportation to the CMHA offices for group sessions can be a barrier for some family members.

To overcome some of these challenges, C.O.I coordinators try to find times and locations that fit the needs of family members. They also offer phone support for those who prefer to remain anonymous or who need individual support. Ongoing awareness-raising is another important component that helps overcome the challenges of offering family peer support in a rural setting.

## Next Steps

The initiative will continue to encourage and facilitate family peer support and wellness groups, and provide individual family members with peer support, as needed, across the Muskoka-Parry Sound District.

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**Watch the webinar here:**  
<http://eenet.ca/resource/three-perspectives-family-support-promising-and-established-practices-family-caregiver>

**Find out more about the Family Caregiver Community of Interest here:** [eenet.ca/initiative/family-caregiver-community-interest#about](http://eenet.ca/initiative/family-caregiver-community-interest#about)