

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

Promising and established practices for family caregiver engagement: Three perspectives on Family Support : Building bridges of hope and care

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 “Building bridges of hope and care: Family support at the Prevention and Early Intervention Program for Psychosis (PEPP) - Montreal,” presented by Mary Anne Levasseur, PEPP-Montreal, Douglas Mental Health University Institute, one component of the second webinar titled “Three Perspectives on Family support.”

What is the family peer support program?

[PEPP-Montréal](#) is a program for youth experiencing an untreated first episode of psychosis. PEPP-Montreal has offered group psycho-education to families since the program’s inception in 2003. In 2012, a peer-driven family support pilot project was initiated to provide family members of new PEPP clients, with assistance and support from family caregivers with lived experience.

What types of services does the initiative include?

The primary form of support is group meetings, where families can discuss and share knowledge about their journey in an informal setting. These meetings offer the following benefits:

- Learning about psychosis, system navigation, and available resources;
- Emotional support, guidance, and empathy;
- Coping strategies and solutions to challenges; and
- Approaches to self-care.

In addition, a facilitator provides individual family support, offers psychoeducation, liaises with the clinic's teams to ensure families are part of the team, and provides links to other community resources.

What is the evidence to support this program?

Between January 2012 and December 2016, more than 120 family support group meetings were held at PEPP-Montréal. More than 150 family members and caregivers signed up for peer support during that time. They used the services in different ways, including attending group meetings or one-on-one meetings with a facilitator.

At the end of 2016, an online survey in English and French was sent to the families and caregivers who attended the family support group meetings. The results showed that:

- More than 50% attended 11 or more meetings, which helped to build trust and relationships with peers over time;
- 69% attended for a few months or more, and the majority started attending within six months of their family member's first treatment; and
- The majority of participants agreed that family peer support meetings helped them to better cope with crisis situations and with self-care, and that they benefited from the knowledge that peers provided.

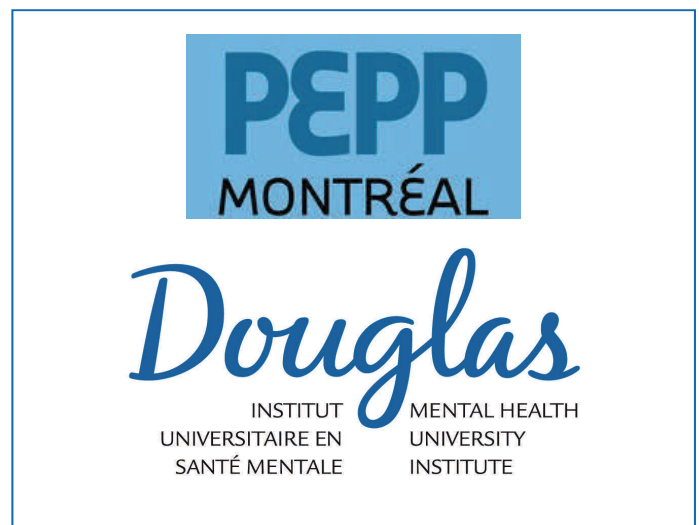
What are the challenges to putting this practice into place?

One of the main challenges was developing communication pathways among families, their youth and clinical team, largely related to concerns about how to protect the person's privacy. Another challenge was how to improve collaboration between the clinical team and family members to help the youth stay engaged in the PEPP services. These concerns can be addressed by developing an action plan for each family. Program staff members are developing practice guidelines to help participants better communicate with each other.

Next Steps

The program will continue to support families and caregivers and will be evaluated on an ongoing basis to ensure that it meets the needs of clients and their families .

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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