

Veteran-Centered Brief Family Consultation

Module One: Introduction to Veteran-Centered Brief Family Consultation

What is Veteran-Centered Brief Family Consultation?

- A brief intervention, 1-3 sessions, no more than 5
- Can be conducted with or without the veteran present
- Can provide:
 - Education about mental illness
 - Support to veterans
 - Support to family members and other caregivers
 - Advocacy
 - Advice
 - Skills training
 - Referral to mental health resources
 - Uses informational and educational materials
 - Involves liaison with other services

Why use Family Consultation?

- It's good clinical practice!
- Family involvement has benefits: Better outcomes and Veteran more likely to stay in treatment.

Role of the Clinician

- Hear the Veteran's and family member's story
- Clarify their concerns
- Explore solutions to their problems
- Provide resources
- Develop a plan

Defining “Family”

- Up to the Veteran to determine who to include to support recovery goals
- Family Members, Friends, Significant Others, Roommates, Other Supportive People

Process of Family Consultation

- 1) Informing and Engaging the Veteran
- 2) Informing and Engaging Family/Friends
- 3) Initial Session
- 4) Additional Sessions
- 5) Follow-up Session

Differences Between Family Consultation and Family Therapy		
Difference	Family Consultation	Family Therapy
Length of Treatment	Short Term: 1-3 sessions; Max 5 sessions	Longer in length; Varies by model
Focus	Focused on here and now; Content rather than process; Problem-focused	Unresolved issues from the past; Balance of content and process
Content	Education, information, advocacy, and skills training	Direct intervention to relieve symptoms
Hierarchy	Veteran, Family and Clinician are all equal	Model of Family Therapy dictates authority
Agenda	Begins with Veteran and Family; Jointly negotiated and agreed upon by all those participating	Start with most pressing needs, often symptom related

When to Consider Offering Family Consultation

- Frequent relapse or at risk for relapse
- Persistently exacerbated symptoms
- Transition point in life and need support
- Heavily reliant on others
- Family and friends need education or support
- Family makes frequent contact with treatment team
- First step in assessment or treatment planning when considering Family Therapy

Contraindications

- Individual circumstances surrounding sensitive clinical and legal issues should be carefully explored to avoid potential damage to, or exploitation of, the Veteran.
- Contraindications may include:
 - Abuse
 - Trauma
 - Divorce
 - Custody
 - Inheritance
 - Financial support

Obtaining Consent to Involve Family/Friends in Care: Thoroughly Discuss Confidentiality

- Identify information they are releasing:
 - General information about the illness such as symptoms, prognosis and treatment OR specific information about them, such as their symptoms and the treatment they are receiving.
- Identify the specific information:
 - They don't want released.

- They don't want discussed without their presence.
- They would rather disclose themselves.
- Inform that they can change their consent options at any time.
- Have the Veteran sign the release of information form.

The Family Consultation Kit

- Supplies (Notepad, pens, markers, dry erase board or a large paper pad with an easel, Release of Information forms for the veteran to sign)
- Family Guidelines for Veterans and their family members
 - http://www.mirecc.va.gov/visn22/familyconsultation_familyguidelines.pdf
- Family Needs Assessment Survey – assesses needs and goals and should be completed prior to the first Consultation session
 - Veteran Version:
http://www.mirecc.va.gov/visn22/familyconsultation_needs_assessment_survey_Veteran.pdf
 - Family Version:
http://www.mirecc.va.gov/visn22/familyconsultation_needs_assessment_survey_Family.pdf
- Education Resources
 - Education handouts about specific diagnoses:
http://www.mirecc.va.gov/visn22/Family_Consultation_Education_Handouts.asp
 - Other MIRECC mental health education products:
<http://www.mirecc.va.gov/apps/activities/products/products.asp>
 - List of book and article references about specific diagnoses
- Specific Skill Handouts
 - Problem-Solving Worksheet:
http://www.mirecc.va.gov/visn22/problemsolving_worksheet.pdf
 - Communication Skills Worksheet:
http://www.mirecc.va.gov/visn22/Family_Communication_Handouts.asp
 - Warning Sign Assessment for SMI:
http://www.mirecc.va.gov/visn22/warningsigns_forSMI_assessment.pdf
 - Symptom Tracking Worksheet:
http://www.mirecc.va.gov/visn22/symptomtracking_worksheet.pdf
 - Relapse Prevention Worksheet:
http://www.mirecc.va.gov/visn22/relapseprevention_worksheet.pdf
- VA & Community Resources
 - Referral information for family and couple's therapy at VA
 - Referral information for Family Education programs at VA
 - NAMI and NAMI's Family-to-Family Education Program
www.nami.org
 - Program brochures about community services
- Additional Resources
 - For the most updated information about resources and VA family policy, visit the VA Family Services Website:
<https://dvagov.sharepoint.com/sites/VACOMentalHealth/family/>