



## Families: Partners in care

Families can play an important role in a person's recovery from mental health and addiction. Family members are often the first to see the signs and symptoms of an emerging mental health problem and can be instrumental in supporting their family member to seek help.

## What does family mean?

At CAMH, we have a broad definition of family. The family comprises all those people who care about and support the person, meaning a relative, partner, close friend, co-worker, or any supportive person.

## Office of Family Engagement

The Office of Family Engagement (OFE) recognizes and celebrates the contribution of families. Mental illness and addiction affect families in many ways. We know that families can best support their loved one when they themselves are supported. We also acknowledge the need to consider the family voice in order to improve services. The OFE has three priorities: the Family Resource Centre, the Family Advisory Committee, and improving system navigation for families at CAMH and in the larger city- and province-wide systems.

## Family Resource Centre

When you open the door to the Family Resource Centre (FRC) you'll find a safe and welcoming space with comfortable chairs, a child-friendly play area, and more:

- printed educational materials on mental health and addiction that you can keep
- a lending library of recommended resources, family guides and memoirs
- information on community supports
- access to a computer, printer and phone
- volunteers, trained through Volunteer Resources, who can answer your questions and help you get connected.

Family members who are unable to drop in to the Family Centre can reach a team member by telephone, e-mail or regular mail and receive information back any of those ways.

## Family Advisory Committee

The Family Advisory Committee (FAC) represents the broad interests of family members with lived experience supporting a family member with a mental illness and/or addiction. The FAC advocates client- and family-centred care and works to enhance the client and family experience at CAMH. The FAC is a partnership between 10 family members and two CAMH staff. Family members who are interested in joining can contact the OFE for a recruitment package.

## System navigation

Navigating the mental health and addiction system is a challenge. The OFE is dedicated to learning how we can make it easier for families to find what they need. Volunteers at the FRC will help you navigate the system, and staff will welcome your input, suggestions and stories as we make it easier to get the information you need.

## Ways to engage with the OFE

- Visit us, and have a look around.
- Fill out our evaluation form—how did you find us, what do you think, how can we do better—and put it in the suggestion box.
- Apply to be a FAC member.
- Sign up to be contacted for family member focus groups, surveys and events.
- Borrow a book, write a brief review, or just share your star rating in the back of the book for other family members to find.
- Complete the OPOC-MHA (Ontario Perception of Care Tool for Mental Health and Addictions) as a family member, and let your voice be heard across the province.
- Just tell us what you need.