NC DEPARTMENT OF
HEALTH AND
HUMAN SERVICES
Division of Mental Health,
Developmental Disabilities and
Substance Use Services



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Hot Topics Spotlight

National Family Caregivers Awareness Month
Supporting Those Who Support Others

DMH/DD/SUS is committed to expanding access to quality care for people with mental health conditions, intellectual and developmental disabilities, traumatic brain injury, and substance use disorders. An important part of that commitment is recognizing and supporting the family members and kinship caregivers who help loved ones navigate care, maintain stability and participate in their communities.

Parents, partners, siblings, grandparents, relatives and friends who support loved ones do not necessarily call themselves caregivers; they simply see themselves as the person their loved one needs. They coordinate appointments, manage medications, provide transportation, connect individuals to services, and often serve as the first source of support during difficult times.

While caregiving can be meaningful and rewarding, it can also create significant challenges. Caregivers may experience stress, anxiety, depression, exhaustion, grief, and isolation while balancing the ongoing needs of their loved ones and themselves.

Building a System That Better Supports Families

DMH/DD/SUS workforce development initiatives are designed to build a thriving workforce that will provide quality care for people who need it as well as relieving the burden on family caregivers. When trained professionals are difficult to find, families and loved ones must fill the gaps, sometimes providing complex support for which they have not been trained.

DMH/DD/SUS continues to invest in initiatives that recruit, train, and retain a strong workforce, including:

- Qualified Professional Pathways
- Social Work Pipeline Programs
- Licensed Workforce Loan Repayment Programs
- Peer Support Investments
- Direct Support Professional Development

A stronger workforce improves access to dependable care and allows family members to focus on being family, rather than navigating systems and filling service gaps on their own.

Supporting Families Across the Continuum of Care

Families need support before, during, and after a crisis. Routine treatment, respite services, early intervention, and planning can help prevent crises and promote long term stability. When immediate help is needed, families need someone to contact, someone to respond, and a safe place to go. Resources available across North Carolina include:

- 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline
- NC Peer Warmline
- Mobile Crisis Teams
- Community Crisis Centers
- Walk-in Clinics

These services help connect individuals and families to ongoing treatment, updated crisis plans, and additional caregiver supports that can reduce stress and improve outcomes.
For individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities and the people who support them, Inclusion Connects provides information about services, community living, employment, education, and other resources that promote greater choice, independence, and inclusion.

Learning From Caregiver Experiences
Caregiver stories provide important insight into both the challenges and rewards of supporting a loved one. Consider reading:

- *ROCK ON: A Caregiving Story* from the Autism Society of North Carolina
- *Fighting for My Daughter's Recovery by Demanding a Change in the System* from NAMI

These perspectives reinforce the importance of building a system that supports not only individuals receiving services, but also the families who walk alongside them.

Resources for Caregivers

- Training for Parents, Caregivers and Agency Staff: Online Training for Caregivers
- National Alliance for Caregiving (NAC) and National Alliance on Mental Health (NAMI) article: What the Data Tells Us About Mental Health and Family Caregiving
- NAC and NAMI Brief: Mental Health Impacts of Family Caregiving
- NAMI Supports and Education: NAMI Supports for Caregivers
- Resources for Older Adults and Caregivers: NCDHHS Division of Aging
- Find Local Support for Older Adults and Caregivers: Area Agencies on Aging

Supporting Those Who Support Others

Family caregivers play a vital role in helping individuals access care, maintain stability, and participate fully in their communities. As we continue strengthening North Carolina's system of care, we must also ensure that caregivers have access to the resources, services, and support they need.

During National Family Caregivers Awareness Month, we recognize and thank the family caregivers whose dedication makes a difference every day. Their partnership is essential to the well-being and recovery of the people we serve.