



The ParentingWell Practice Approach: Findings from Recent Research

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Introduction

ParentingWell is an approach to behavioral health that makes talking about parenting and family experiences a routine part of the therapeutic conversation with adults with mental illness. It is described in two published articles, “The ParentingWell Practice Approach” and “The ParentingWell Learning Collaborative Feasibility Study.” These papers describe (1) the adaptation of an intervention for parents with mental illness, originally developed in Finland, to meet the needs of clinicians and parents with mental illness in the United States and (2) the feasibility and impact of the ParentingWell Learning Collaborative (PWLC; an opportunity for practitioners to learn how to use ParentingWell).

Background

Family-focused behavioral health care is critical for parents with mental illness. However, there is very little research about interventions for families with parents with serious mental illness. Also, practitioners have said that they lack skills, knowledge, and confidence in working with parents and their families. Additional research is needed in order to adequately support parents within the mental health service system.

Findings

In order to address these gaps, ParentingWell was developed. ParentingWell is an approach to behavioral health that incorporates routine conversations about parenting and family life. It fits into the routine workflow and builds on practitioners’ existing skills. Four core elements (engage, explore, plan, access & advocate) and four underlying principles (trauma-informed, strengths-based, family-focused, culturally sensitive) underlie ParentingWell.

Practitioners who participated in the ParentingWell Learning Collaborative (an opportunity for practitioners to learn how to use ParentingWell) were engaged and highly satisfied with the PWLC. They used PWLC skills, tools, and resources with parents they serve.

The ParentingWell Program

Four Core Elements

① Engage



② Explore



③ Plan



④ Access & Advocate



Four Core Principles

① Trauma-informed

② Strengths-based

③ Family-focused

④ Culturally sensitive

The ParentingWell Program: Four Core Elements and Four Core Principles

Implications

This research is an important step towards preparing adult mental health service providers to work in family-focused, parent-informed ways that will ultimately improve outcomes for adults and their children. Future research is needed in order to better understand the impact of ParentingWell: on practitioners' behaviors, on parents' wellbeing, and ultimately, on their children.

Methods

Let's Talk about Children (LTC) is an intervention for parents with mental illness developed in Finland. The goal of LTC is to support parents by providing them with information about child development, and by providing them opportunities to talk about their children. An Adaptation Team (including researchers, policy makers, clinicians, and parents) worked to adapt LTC so that it would be most useful for adult mental health service providers in Massachusetts, and the parents they serve. The result of this work is ParentingWell approach and its manual, the ParentingWell Practice Profile. Twenty-nine practitioners participated in the PWLC, which included in-person orientation, training, and debriefing sessions, virtual coaching sessions, and communication via an online hub. These participants provided information about their engagement and satisfaction with the PWLC, and their use of the materials and skills.

References

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