



# HELPING HANDS



## Resources for Families Coping with Mental Health and Substance Use Disorders

(excerpts from SAMSHA.gov)

Every family is unique, but all families share a bond that can be used to support one another during trying times. While there is no one-size-fits-all solution for helping a family member who is drinking too much, using drugs, or dealing with a mental illness, research shows that family support can play a major role in helping a loved one with mental health and substance use disorders.

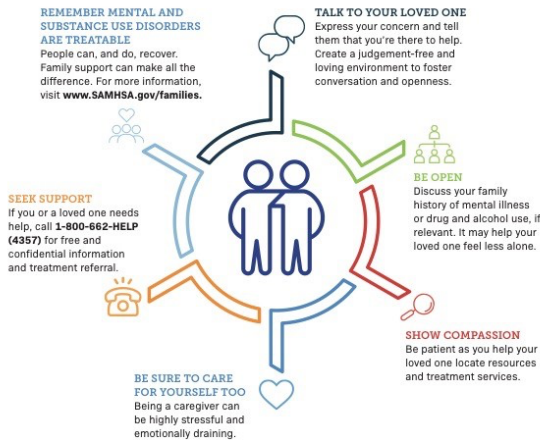
When a family member is experiencing a mental health or substance use disorder, it can affect more than just the person in need of recovery. Evidence has shown that some people have a genetic predisposition for developing mental health and substance use disorders and may be at greater risk based on environmental factors such as having grown up in a home affected by a family member's mental health or history of substance use. Families should be open to the options of support groups or family therapy and counseling, which can improve treatment effectiveness by supporting the whole family.

It is also important to remember that the unique challenges that come from helping a loved one with a mental health or substance use disorder can be taxing, caregivers should take steps to prioritize their own health as well.

Family members may be more likely to notice when their loved ones are experiencing changes in mood or behavior. Being able to offer support, family members can connect those in need with treatment, resources, and services to begin and stay on their recovery journey.

### HELPING A LOVED ONE DEALING WITH MENTAL AND/OR SUBSTANCE USE DISORDERS

You may suspect or discover your loved one is dealing with a mental illness, drinking too much, or using drugs. As a family member, you can play a central role in getting them the help they need.



SAMSHA's mission is to reduce the impact of substance abuse and mental illness on America's communities. 1-877-SAMSHA-7 (1-877-726-4727) • 1-800-487-4889 (TDD) • [www.samhsa.gov](http://www.samhsa.gov)

### SUPPORTING A LOVED ONE DEALING WITH MENTAL AND/OR SUBSTANCE USE DISORDERS

#### STARTING THE CONVERSATION

When a family member is drinking too much, using drugs, or struggling with a mental disorder, your support can be key to getting them the treatment they need. Starting the conversation is the first step to getting help.

#### How You Can Help

- 1 IDENTIFY AN APPROPRIATE TIME AND PLACE.** Consider a private setting with limited distractions, such as at home or on a walk.
- 2 EXPRESS CONCERNS AND BE DIRECT.** Ask how they are feeling and describe the reasons for your concern.
- 3 ACKNOWLEDGE THEIR FEELINGS AND LISTEN.** Listen openly, actively, and without judgement.
- 4 OFFER TO HELP.** Provide reassurance that mental and/or substance use disorders are treatable. Help them locate and connect to treatment services.
- 5 BE PATIENT.** Recognize that helping your loved one doesn't happen overnight. Continue reaching out with offers to listen and help.

#### What to Say

"I've been worried about you. Can we talk? If not, who are you comfortable talking to?"

"I see you're going through something. How can I best support you?"

"I care about you and am here to listen. Do you want to talk about what's been going on?"

"I've noticed you haven't seemed like yourself lately. How can I help?"

For more resources, visit [www.SAMSHA.gov/families](http://www.SAMSHA.gov/families).

If you or someone you know needs help, call **1-800-662-HELP (4357)** for free and confidential information and treatment referral.

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## Parents and Families Resources

The following resources can further assist families and parent-run organizations.

- The 20-Minute Guide from The Center for Motivation and Change – 2017 helps individuals address their loved one’s substance use and learn the ways to prevent it.
- Family-Driven Care in America: More Than a Good Idea – 2010 provides a history of the evolution of family-driven care in the United States.
- Family Peer-to-Peer Support Programs in Children’s Mental Health: A Critical Issues Guide at the IDEAS Center – 2008 (PDF | 475 KB) discusses design, implementation, and sustainability of family peer-to-peer programs in children’s mental health.
- Family-to-Family Peer Support: Models and Evaluation at the Family-Run Executive Director Leadership Association (FREDLA) – 2012 (PDF | 447 KB) shares diverse organizational models, discusses training and certification of peer support workers, and offers tips for measuring outcomes.
- Standards of Excellence for Family-Run Organizations from FREDLA – 2015 (PDF | 868 KB) provide guidance on maintaining organizational accountability and sustainability.
  - Access video trainings on parents and families, youth and young adults, and other topics.



The heart and soul of the District 141 Employee Assistance Program is the local lodge EAP peer coordinator. These dedicated men and women volunteer their personal time to assist other union members and their families who are experiencing personal difficulties. EAP peer volunteers do not make clinical

diagnoses or clinical evaluations; however, they are trained to make a basic assessment of your situation and refer you to an appropriate resource for a more detailed evaluation. EAP peer volunteers will follow up to ensure you have been able to access services that address the difficulty you were experiencing.

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**Support Groups**

National Alliance on Mental Illness

NAMI Family Support Group  
NAMI is a support group for family members, significant others, and friends of people with mental health conditions. Groups meet weekly, every other week or monthly, depending on location. Many support groups are virtual, and attendance is open to everyone across the country.

Ala NON  
Help and hope for friends and family of addicts.

Al-Anon members are people, just like you, who are worried about someone with a drinking problem. Family members have the opportunity to learn from the experiences of others who have faced similar problems.

Your EAP Representative  
(Listed in the box to the left)