



Parental Mental Illness: Promising Practices Programs Serving Families when a Parent has a Mental Illness

This SAMHSA/CMHS funded research describes programs throughout the country that respond to and serve families where a parent has a mental illness. Five programs highlighted below were selected for site visits. Programs differed by geographic location, program history and development, theoretical orientation, funding streams, target populations, program goals, and outcomes.

- **Children and Parents Together (CAPT)** in Commack, New York provides nursery and preschool support to children of parents with mental illness, and support groups for their parents. CAPT takes a flexible approach to "meeting families where they're at," and a team approach to supporting parents through psychoeducation and skills training. Staff focus on relationship development issues. Children are encouraged to develop age-appropriate language, emotional expression, behavior management, and social skills. For more information contact Mary Sidoti at Children and Parents Together, Family Service League of Suffolk County, Inc., 38 Park Avenue, Bayshore, NY 11706, phone (631) 666-2149.
- **The Emerson-Davis Family Development Center**, located in Brooklyn, New York, is home to 16 homeless single parent families with a mental illness and their young children. Staff, available 24 hours a day, provide counseling and coordination of mental health services; on site crisis intervention; coordination of adult and child health care; prevocational and supported employment skills training; coordination of special needs, education services for adults and children; parenting skills assessment and training; child care and after-school services for children including tutoring and therapy; substance abuse counseling; assistance and training in maximizing entitlements; and rehabilitation skills training for independent living. Residents can access an array of additional support services available through the larger Institute for Community Living agency. For more information contact Harvey Lieberman, Ph.D., Institute for Community Living, Inc., 40 Rector Street, New York, NY 10006, (212) 385-3030, ext. 112.
- **Family Support Services/PACE (Parents, Advocacy, Coordination and Education)** in Iowa City, Iowa, is a community mental health program that strives to prevent and reduce child welfare involvement and unplanned hospitalizations for families in which parents have mental illness. Staff work with families towards developing problem solving techniques, counseling and the education of both parents and children regarding mental illness. Family Support Services/PACE aims to increase the quality of life for families while building a bridge between mental health services and other service delivery systems. For more information contact Kit Crane, Mid-Eastern Iowa Community Mental Health Center, 507 East College, Iowa City, Iowa 52240, phone (319) 338-5293.
- **The Infant-Parent Program** in San Francisco, in existence since 1979, provides outpatient mental health services to infants, toddlers, and their families. Their psychotherapeutic approach focuses on the parent-child relationship, and works to increase parents' self-esteem while stressing the importance of the role of parent. Parents and children often receive treatment together. The Infant-Parent Program also offers developmental neuropsychological assessments, and can help with childcare and school planning. For more information contact Betsy Wolfe at San Francisco General Hospital, 1001 Potrero Ave., San Francisco, CA 94110, phone (415) 206-5270.
- **The Invisible Children's Project (ICP)** of the Orange County Mental Health Association in Goshen, New York embraces two guiding principles in working with parents with mental illness and their children: parents want to be the best they can be; and the act of parenting is a significant, oftentimes healing role for adults with mental illness. ICP provides a range of family-centered services, often in the home, including advocacy, information and referral, case management, crisis planning, parent support and education, respite and childcare. For more information contact Linda Norman at Orange County (NY) Mental Health Association, 20 Walker Street, Goshen, NY 10924, phone (845) 294-7411.

For more information about parents with mental illness and resources for families, please contact the Program for Parenting Well, University of Massachusetts Medical School, Center for Mental Health Services Research, Department of Psychiatry, 55 Lake Avenue North, Worcester, MA 01655. We can also be reached via phone (508-856-8722) or email at www.parentingwell.org.