



**Mental Illness
Caregivers Association
– A Family Voice**

“Focusing on the impact of mental illness and/or addictions on the quality of life of both the ill person and family members as caregivers”

“Identifying challenges, finding solutions and addressing caregiver priorities”

“Implementing a Roadmap for Change along the way”

BACKGROUND

The quality of life of persons living with mental illness and their family members is impacted in many ways including mental health, physical health and financial concerns that significantly stress the capacity of the ill person and their families to cope with the many challenges confronted along the journey to recovery.

In 2012 the Mental Illness Caregivers Association (MICA) initiated a “Quality of Life” study that had as its focus the impact of mental illness and/or addictions on the quality of life of both the ill person and family members as caregivers. Discussion forums including caregivers and service providers were held in the following communities:

- Smiths Falls on March 30, 2012;
- Cornwall on September 27, 2012;
- Pembroke on October 19, 2012;
- Ottawa on November 9, 2012.

Challenges and solutions identified during the discussions forums were discussed in the context of the following:

- Physical health components: physical functioning, role-physical, bodily pain and general health;
- Mental health components: vitality, social functioning, role emotional and mental health.

A FAMILY SUMMIT – CAREGIVER PRIORITIES

At a Family Summit held on February 22, 2013 attended by representatives from all regions involved in the discussion forums, caregivers and mental health service providers identified the following priorities:

- Family education and support delivered as a common program across all regions;
- Employment – “exploring the possibilities”;
- Housing and recovery – “thinking outside the box”;
- Listening to families – asking families to share their experiences when accessing treatment for their loved ones;
- What happens when I die – planning for continuing support for family members with mental illness and/or addictions;
- A review of developments related to disability benefits – understanding the impact of proposed changes and what more needs to be done;
- Attending to the physical well being and mental health of caregivers – “exploring the possibilities around promotion and prevention”.

A SECOND FAMILY SUMMIT – GETTING INVOLVED

A second Family Summit was held on October 17, 2014 and included:

- The presentation of a “Roadmap for Change”;
- A report on MICA’s efforts since the 1st Family Summit;

“Ensuring as many individuals as possible get involved”

- Setting the stage for involving volunteers in the continued development and implementation of action plans for each priority ;
- Reaching out to the participants asking for their support for our current and future efforts.

There was consensus that every effort should be made to ensure all regions have an opportunity to get involved – so MICA agreed to proceed in accordance with the following:

- Organizing a family education and support event in Smith Falls;
- Attending to the physical and mental health of caregivers in Ottawa – through the development of a mental illness caregiver guide in consultation with Ottawa Public Health, Canadian Mental Health Association and Canadian Public Health Association;
- Organizing a “what happens when I am gone” workshop in Cornwall;
- Organizing a review of ODSP and other related disability benefits workshop in Renfrew County.

OUR INVITATION

Caregivers and mental health service providers are invited to join us and representatives from some of the organizations we have collaborated with in the last year at our 3rd Family Summit on October 24, 2015. These organizations include the Ottawa Public Health, Canadian Mental Health Association, Canadian Public Health Association, Citizen Advocacy, Canadian Agency for Drugs and Technology in Health, Ontario Disability Support Program, Ontario Works and family organizations such as OASIS Kanata, Families Impacted by Mental Illness Smith Falls and the Cornwall and District Family Support Group.

Save the Date – October 24, 2015 - as we continue on our journey, we look forward to sharing the results of our efforts to date at our 3rd Family Summit this fall.

We’re busy planning the agenda for this very important day. We will include a report on progress made since our 2nd Family Summit last Fall including the development of a mental illness caregivers resource; on-going discussions related to ODSP and related disability benefits with links to mental health services; initial developments related to housing trusts and the creation of family networks; and finally, understanding what the evidence says as caregivers search for answers - and more topics of interest as our planning continues.

“Finding solutions that will have a lasting and positive impact on the quality of life of caregivers and their ill loved ones”

OUR GOAL – FAMILIES BUILDING PARTNERSHIPS

Our goal is to involve as many caregivers as possible as we continue to collaborate with our partners in finding solutions that will have a lasting and positive impact on the quality of life of caregivers and their ill loved ones. Join us on our journey and help us to change lives.