

RESOURCES FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

Al-Anon Family Groups
P.O. Box 862, Midtown Station
New York, NY 10018-0862
212/302-7240

**Center for Mental Health Services
Knowledge Exchange Network**
P.O. Box 42490
Washington, DC 20015
800/789-2647

**Federation of Families for
Children's Mental Health**
1021 Prince Street
Alexandria, VA 22314-2971
703/684-7710

Human Interaction Research Institute
1811 Nordhoff Street
Northridge, CA 91330-8245
818/677-2550

National Alliance for the Mentally Ill
200 North Glebe Road, Suite 1015
Arlington, VA 22203-3754
703/524-7600; e-mail: nami@aol.com

**National Depressive and
Manic-Depressive Association**
730 North Franklin Street, Suite 501
Chicago, IL 60610
312/642-0049

**National Institute of Corrections
Community Corrections Division**
500 1st Street, 7th Floor
Washington, DC 20534
800/995-6423

**National Institute of Corrections
Jail Division**
1960 Industrial Circle, Suite A
Longmont, CO 80501
800/995-6429

National Mental Health Association
1021 Prince Street
Alexandria, VA 22314
800/965-NMHA

PRIDE
50 Hurt Plaza, Suite 210
Atlanta, GA 30303
404/577-4500

PROTOTYPES Systems Change Center
5601 West Slauson Avenue, #200
Culver City, CA 90230
310/641-7795

ABOUT THE GAINS CENTER

The National GAINS Center for People with Co-Occurring Disorders in the Justice System was established in 1995. The Center gathers information about mental health and substance abuse services provided in the justice system, tailors materials to the specific needs of localities, and provides technical assistance to help them plan, implement and operate appropriate, cost-effective programs.

The GAINS Center is a Federal partnership between two centers of the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration -- the Center for Substance Abuse Treatment and the Center for Mental Health Services -- and the National Institute of Corrections.

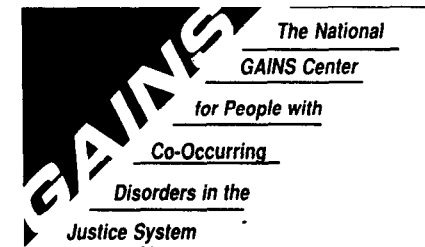
The GAINS Center is operated by Policy Research, Inc. in collaboration with the Louis de la Parte Florida Mental Health Institute. For more information, contact:



The GAINS Center
262 Delaware Avenue
Delmar, NY 12054
Phone: 800/311-GAIN
Fax: 518/439-7612
E-mail: gains@prainc.com

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INVOLVING FAMILIES IN SYSTEMS CHANGE:

**IMPROVING SERVICES
FOR PEOPLE WITH
CO-OCCURRING DISORDERS
IN THE CRIMINAL AND
JUVENILE JUSTICE SYSTEMS**

Strategies for Families

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WHY YOU SHOULD GET INVOLVED

Serious mental illness and substance abuse in a loved one often lead to feelings of hopelessness, especially when your loved one also goes to jail. One way to combat these feelings is to become involved in advocacy work - to *change the system* so that these vulnerable people get more appropriate care.

It begins with education - learning about the nature of mental illness and substance abuse, and about opportunities for systems change. Informed family members and friends of people with these co-occurring disorders can bring a *unique perspective* to programs and policies serving their loved ones.

BUT, IT'S NOT ALWAYS EASY

Some of the *challenges* to becoming involved in systems change include:

- Some family members feel embarrassed or ashamed about having a family member with mental illness, substance abuse, and jail experience, and may be reluctant to become involved in public activities that could expose some very personal family situations.
- Family members may believe that there is little or nothing they can do that will *actually make a difference* in programs and policies affecting their loved ones.
- Some family members may feel as though their efforts are not welcomed by service providers or policy makers, or that when their input is solicited, this solicitation is for "public relations" value only.
- Sometimes it is difficult for family members to think about long-term solutions when there are so many immediate crises.
- Many family members simply do not know what to do to get started.

HOW DO YOU GET INVOLVED?

- *Join with members of other families in similar situations*, in support groups and in advocacy activities (such as those offered by local chapters of the Alliance for the Mentally Ill or Al-Anon Family Groups), which can reduce feelings of embarrassment or shame. This involvement can also help to create a support base, which may be valuable in times of crisis.
- *Become informed on the nature of mental illness and substance abuse*, and on how treatment programs for these co-occurring disorders might be improved for people in the criminal justice system. This will help families become valuable members of the systems change team.
- *Get public exposure* for this issue to help bring about systems change. This may include writing to police commissioners, judges, elected officials, newspapers, and local television stations. It may also include appearing on television or radio shows.
- *Participate in advocacy activities* to help family members understand what, realistically, can be accomplished when family members, consumers, service providers and policy-makers work together for systems change. This may include serving on a committee or a task force.
- *Write to legislative representatives* about increasing funds for jail diversion and in-jail treatment programs, and changing state laws and local policies regarding the care and treatment of people with co-occurring disorders in the criminal justice system.

EXAMPLES OF SUCCESS

- Members of the *San Diego Alliance for the Mentally Ill* successfully brought together representatives from the Police Department and County Mental Health Services to form a Psychiatric Emergency Response Team, which provides emergency services for people with mental illness and works to prevent inappropriate incarceration.
- In *Montgomery County, Pennsylvania*, family members and consumers serve on a *Forensic Task Force* with representatives from criminal justice, mental health, substance abuse and the courts. The Task Force has the authority to implement changes in all systems affecting people with severe mental illness. The Montgomery County Emergency Service (MCES) has been identified as a "model program" by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) and by *American Jails* magazine.
- Family members serve on forensic advocacy committees at the national and state levels, working together to provide technical assistance to families, professionals and policy-makers on legislative issues on both state and national levels across the country.

Families can be advocates, helping service systems acquire the financial and political resources needed to improve the system.

RESOURCES FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

American Correctional Association
8025 Laurel Lake Court
Laurel, MD 20707
301/206-5100

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Knowledge Exchange Network**
P.O. Box 42490
Washington, DC 20015
800/789-2647

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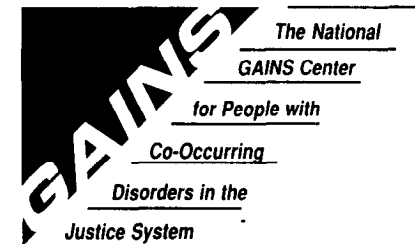
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*Strategies for
Service Providers*

HOW FAMILIES CAN HELP WITH SYSTEMS CHANGE

Families of consumers who are mentally ill and substance abusers often can be highly effective as advocates for systems change. They bring life skills, credibility, energy...and determination based on their commitment to helping their relatives.

Families can be advocates, helping service systems acquire the financial and political resources needed to improve the system.

Family involvement begins with education - both for families to learn about what systems changes are needed, and for providers and policy-makers to learn about the unique perspectives families have to offer.

Family involvement also means giving families active roles in *implementing* services or systems changes.

CHALLENGES TO INVOLVING FAMILIES

Perhaps the biggest challenge to involving families in systems change is *stigma*. Families are often ashamed about having a family member with mental illness and substance abuse problems, and are reluctant to become involved in activities that might mean more visibility in the community.

Tokenism, whether "real" or "imagined," can also be a problem. Professionals and community leaders sometimes want to involve families for "public relations" value, but are hesitant to include them in debating issues and in real decision-making.

Families also may believe erroneously that they are only tokens, and will decline to take a more active role, even when their input is seriously solicited.

Families also may feel it is unrealistic to believe that their efforts will actually bring about systems change, while others simply do not know what to do. Families need *education about systems change* - how to bring it about and what to expect as a result of their efforts.

STRATEGIES FOR INVOLVING FAMILIES

Family members can serve highly effective *advocacy* functions in bringing about systems change, often bringing direct *energy* and *skill* to the process based on their commitment to helping their ill relatives. Ways to involve them in the systems change process include:

- Identifying families to get involved through contact with Alliance for the Mentally Ill affiliates, mental health associations and other mental health, substance abuse and forensic mental health organizations.
- Identifying leaders not only locally, but through contact with the National Alliance for the Mentally Ill, the National Mental Health Association and other groups that can nominate families in your community who are also leaders on the national scene.
- Trying to identify one or two family leaders who can be "appointed as a committee" to recruit other families on your behalf.
- Dealing honestly with the issues of stigma and tokenism, making sure that family members have "full member" status on task forces, committees, etc.

- Providing education for families on the principles of systems change - how people, organizations and communities can work together to promote enduring change.
- Sharing with families what systems changes you think are needed...but being willing to modify your ideas based on their input.

EXAMPLES OF SUCCESS

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