



LEARNING MODULE I

Seminar # 22

Elements of a Family Plan of Action

Learning Objectives

1. What is the issue.
2. How can the issue impact the family.
3. What are the options.

What is the issue?

Family members are integral to the health and wellbeing of their families. Medical professionals often remark on how helpful family members and friends can be in reporting changes in patients' symptoms and ensuring that patients consistently follow their treatment plan.

As a family member or friend of someone struggling with a substance use disorders, you are in an incredibly unique position. You can offer a different kind of support than a mental health or medical provider can. You are likely the first to notice changes in your loved one's behavior or functioning. You are also likely the first person with an opportunity to intervene to help improve your loved one's situation.

Your role is to support and empower your loved one, often helping them manage the day-to-day struggles they may face because of their substance use disorder, and ultimately helping them to find the treatment they need to get well. It is important that you learn as much as you can about the substance use disorder that impacts your loved one. By learning more about it, you will be able to help them access resources and the support they need.

How can the issue impact the family?

The Elements of a Family Plan of Action

The family has a central role to play in the treatment of any health problem, including substance abuse. Family work has become a strong and continuing theme of many treatment approaches ([Kaufmann and Kaufman 1992a](#); [McCrary and Epstein 1996](#)), but family therapy is not used to its greatest capacity in substance abuse treatment. A primary challenge remains the broadening of the substance abuse recovery support focus from the individual to the family.

THE ELEMENTS OF A "FAMILY PLAN OF ACTION":

Be Specific: write clearly defined sentences. "we will create a network of at least five therapists to choose from for family therapy". For example: "We want to understand the process of drug court, each step in their program."

Make it Measurable: When possible, quantify your action items. This is where being specific helps. What constitutes "more" in more time saves, or less stressful? For example: State a specific amount "to result in a 50% reduction in stress".

Make it Attainable: It is good to set goals that make you stretch and challenge yourself, but you set yourself up for frustration and failure if your goal is impossible. First think “short term timelines”. Then expand out to quarterly and annually. Short achievable goals are often better than one long difficult goal that may or may not be achievable.

Be sure it is relevant: Your goals should fit within what you want/need to accomplish.

Timelines: Give yourself the time to prepare, collect, develop, and implement. Make time your friend in what you do. You have set a date by which your goal will be achieved, and it is reasonable you can achieve it in that timeline.

2. Work Backwards to Set Milestones

Start with the end in mind. Consider the project or family action step is completed. Now, what happened one step prior towards making that final step possible. Then, what happened two steps prior. Continue to do this up to the point where you are currently. Now you know each step/milestone that needs to be completed to achieve this task.

For example, your loved one started their first day of Intense Outpatient Treatment (I.O.P.). The steps it takes to make that happen was we transported them to the facility. The step take before that was, they packed what was required to bring with them to their first session. The step taken before that was, we talked about the positive outcomes that will likely result and what steps the family members will take to be a stronger support in their recovery. And continue, up to where you are currently.

3. Determine What Needs to Happen to Reach Your Goals

During this step, get specific on what it takes to reach your mini and big goals within the time frame. Using a month goal example, to develop a network of support groups to consider, you need to get more than one support group to choose from, because finding the right support group will take several different visits. What is on a to-do list to collect and visit several different support groups and what is the criteria used to evaluate them?

4. Decide What Actions Are Required to Reach Your Goals

For example, to complete the task; I will do this, then this, then this, in sequence. From those steps I can expect to have achieved my task.

5. Put Your Actions into a Schedule

When you complete #4, you should have a list of tasks that need to be completed to reach your goal. Now it is time to put those tasks into your schedule by making a daily plan. These are the tasks you do each day to generate results.

6. Follow Through

Once you have completed the above steps, you should have your daily schedule and targets to shoot for during the process of working on your goal. The next step is to follow your schedule. Do the daily tasks you have assigned yourself to do? When you feel like things are not going well, find a way to keep yourself motivated. That seems like a no-brainer, and yet most people do not achieve their goals because they do not do the work on a regular and consistent basis. In most cases, the plan does not fail, people simply quit.

While you are at it, keep track of your accomplishments and results. Set aside time every month or so to evaluate how well your plan is working and tweak it if you are not making the progress you want.

The true test of whether you will succeed in family plan of action is not only by having a good plan but working your plan. The answer is to get excited about your goals, build in ways to celebrate the small successes, and always keep your eye on the outcome.

Five Effective Steps Video

VIDEO ONE:

ASSIGNMENT VIDEO: On www.youtube.com/

Search Title: Family Action Plan for a Loved One with Depression: Five Effective Steps

Families for Depression Awareness. No one overcomes depression alone. An action plan can help families come together as a team and support someone living with depression. Review these five effective steps to focus your efforts and make progress toward wellness.

What are the options?

It is often helpful to have all the ideas which are action oriented in one place or binder for future reference.

This can be accomplished by purchasing at the office supply store a three-ring binder, Avery Ready Index Tabs, and file folders.

In the Family Plan of Action Binder “table of contents” you will label your different tabs according to the type of material you will store in that section of the binder.

This is a healthy approach towards getting organized because it causes you to make a commitment to a specific course of action (the family plan) and you are now able to share the contents with others, so they can better assist you in the future.

The family members can take this binder with them, containing all 32 key issues and the completed plan of action for each issue, with them when sitting down with a licensed profession for their involvement in the plan.

Because a Family Plan of Action includes the Family Transformational Response (F.T.R.) worksheet and Family Value-Based Decision-Making worksheet, your family plan of action will contain, the solution and decision for this issue and this will be extremely helpful for others to review.