

Report Recommendations

On Pins & Needles: Caregivers of Adults with Mental Illness

With unique challenges facing mental health caregivers, we recommend the following:

- **Integrate mental and behavioral health questions into all health care assessments, and provide screenings** at all health care check-ups for the patients and their family caregivers
- **Encourage treatment parity for mental health issues with that of medical health issues.** This may include providing education for providers, caregivers, and patients about state and federal parity laws and what health care benefits should be covered under a patient's health plan or insurance, such as clinical treatment, health care services, or medications.
- **Provide access to a full array of high-quality behavioral and mental health services across the continuum of care,** as well as access to community inclusion, vocational, educational, and peer supports.
- **Ensure patient access and reimbursement for appropriate medications to treat mental illness,** including access to a full-range of medication and coverage for prescribed medications that work for an individual without overly-restrictive "fail first" policies.
- **Provide assistance for both caregivers and patients in navigating the mental health system, with active outreach to caregivers to offer information and care coordination.** County or state behavioral health entities, as well as health insurers, can play a key role in providing navigation assistance to patients and their families.
- **Include caregivers as part of the health care team,** in ways that allow them to understand their loved one's diagnosis without limiting the patient's independence. Policies and practice should fully include individuals, families, providers, and supports (such as the Open Dialogue model).
- **Educate and provide resources for caregivers of those with mental illness, especially around issues of stress and caregiver health.** Education should include information about services and supports, such as short-term respite, one-to-one support, day programs, and residential services. In addition, peer support for caregivers can alleviate the isolation and stigma that many family caregivers have expressed in caring for a loved one with mental illness.
- **Work to reduce the stigma of mental illness through public awareness campaigns.** Individuals with mental illness and their families continue to feel isolated, which prevents them from reaching out to find resources and supports.

About the Report: *On Pins & Needles: Caregivers of Adults with Mental Illness* is a study by the National Alliance for Caregiving in collaboration with Mental Health America and the National Alliance on Mental Illness. The study provides new data on 1,601 family caregivers of persons with moderate-to-severe mental illness including people caring for a loved one affected by bipolar disorder, schizophrenia, major depression or another mental illness. Findings include gaps in existing coverage and potential solutions. The report also includes public policy recommendations. The study was made possible through generous sponsorship from Allergan, Eli Lilly, Novartis Pharmaceuticals Corporation, and Janssen Scientific Affairs, LLC.

Full Report at: www.caregiving.org/mentalhealth