FAMILY SERVICES FREQUENTLY ASKED Questions

Sunshine Coast Health Centre
Georgia Strait Womens Clinic

1. WHAT SUPPORTS ARE OFFERED FOR FAMILIES AND FRIENDS THROUGH SUNSHINE COAST HEALTH CENTRE?

- **Our Family Services are available all the family and friends of our clients.** The program is offered virtually twice per month includes content explaining the program, addictions and mental health issues as well as how families and friends can support their loved ones. We also offer a 13-part email series that include recorded videos of our facilitator explaining the content. In our video series, we offer various links, articles, handouts, and other useful information for family members.
- **In addition to our videos and written resources, families and friends can speak to our Family Services team.** Our Family Services team is trained to support families in finding services and resources best suited for them. Our team are also available to discuss with you what your loved one is experiencing (if consent is provided by loved one) or aspects of how to rebuild healthy relationships and cope with the effects of having a family or friend who struggles with mental illness. Please note this service is not counselling. Our team can help arrange family counselling with someone in your local community (or virtually) if interested.

2. HOW DO I ACCESS SUPPORTS?

- When your loved one enters the program, they complete paperwork providing consent to who SCHC/GSWC is able to contact as well as to what extent we are allowed to release information. **If you are listed as a consent, you will either receive an email with resources, or a phone call requested your email address to send you resources.**
- After the initial connection, **the responsibility is on the family and friends to contact the Family Services team** if they require further resources or information.

3. HOW LONG DOES SUPPORT LAST?

- Support for family and friends is **ongoing and continues even after your loved one has left** SCHC or GSWC.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

4. WHAT IS SCHC AND GSWC's PERSPECTIVE ON FAMILY INVOLVEMENT?

- Ultimately, we want to empower our clients to take responsibility for their own lives. This means, **we encourage families to be supports but allow their loved one to take ownership of their recovery.** It is a common struggle that individuals with severe mental health issues, including addictions, place responsibility for their issues onto others, including their family. As such, a habit develops were boundaries are crossed in family and friend relationships. Ultimately, your loved one in treatment is an adult, whether they act like it or not. As such, their mental health and the information they release is their responsibility. Partnering with your loved one as they begin to take responsibility of their lives is an essential part in helping your loved one obtain long term recovery.
- Examples include, but are not limited to:
  - Calling SCHC/GSWC staff to get their loved one something rather than encouraging their loved one to advocate for themselves
  - Wanting to know all the details about their loved one's medications with the motivation of ensuring they take their medication rather than encouraging them to take responsibility and regulate their own medication
  - Needing to know all the details of their posttreatment plan in order to keep them accountable, rather than allowing their loved one to take the lead and express their needs

5. SHOULD I CONTACT MY LOVED ONE WHILE THEY ARE IN TREATMENT?

- Yes. **If your loved one wants to speak with you then we encourage contact.** We want to advocate open, honest relationships without avoidance, but we also understand that your loved one is going through a lot while at the centre. There is a balance needed in communication.
- As such, **we encourage families to bring up difficult subjects and not avoid while their loved one is at the centre.** For example, if a spouse needs to discuss an aspect of their finances with her loved one then we would encourage it not to be avoided just because it is difficult. Your loved one has a lot of support while in treatment and in some ways it is an ideal situation to bring up difficult subjects.
- However, **we also would ask family and friends not to purposely pick fights or barrage their loved one with questions about their treatment.** Your loved one is kept very busy while in treatment and is going through 3-6 hours of counselling every day. This means they are usually very emotionally exhausted and need time to process. For that reason, we encourage families to offer supportive statements and give their loved one space if possible.

6. WHAT IF I NEED SUPPORT OUTSIDE WORKING HOURS?

- **Family support staff, coaches, and counsellors works Monday–Friday** year round. The virtual Family Support Session is hosted on Saturdays and can be attended last minute if space permits. Contact Family Services Coordinators for more information.
- **Once your loved one leaves SCHC or GSWC they have access to a 24/7 alumni line.** Given that their recovery is their responsibility, most urgent contact should be made by them to our alumni team.

7. WHAT IS MY ROLE ONCE MY LOVED ONE COMES HOME?

- During the last week of your loved time at SCHC and GSWC, they will be focusing on their post-treatment care plan. The post-treatment care plan includes both discussions about their plans after they leave the centre as well as an actual document. **All clients receive a binder when they enter treatment, which includes the templates for the post-treatment care plan.** The clients are welcome to fill these out as soon as they like though often they wait until the last week.
- **A post-treatment care plan includes things such as going to the gym and seeking counselling, but should focus more on the clients individual goals based on their self- awareness.** Clients who lack self- awareness will have post-treatment care plans that are more generic in nature. We like to see plans that reflect awareness that the client has gained about their person needs during their time in treatment. It is ultimately the client's responsibility to set up the counselling and doctors appointments and such that they need once they leave SCHC/GSWC. Remember, they need to take responsibility of their own lives and that includes setting up their post-treatment care.
- **As a support system, we suggest you ask your loved one if and how they want you to be a part of their post-treatment care but do not assume what they need once they leave.** By asking this question, you invite yourself in for support but leave responsibility and ownership to them. You can of course ask questions and make suggestions but do it from a stance of nonjudgmental curiosity, not a passive method of trying to dictate their actions.

8. HOW DO I KNOW HOW LONG MY LOVED ONE SHOULD BE IN TREATMENT?

- **The conversation around how long your loved one would benefit from treatment is ongoing beginning from the day they first arrive.** The conversation is primarily conducted between the client and the primary counsellor although the medical team, including the psychiatrist, and the clinical team are involved in the conversation as well. Often clients who originally sign up for 30 days end up extending for 2 weeks near the end of their original time in treatment.
- **It is recommended that clients stay for at least 60 days in treatment.** According to research, the optimal time in treatment is 90 days followed by a 9 month scheduled outpatient treatment plan. 30 days in treatment is only recommended for clients who have been to treatment recently or have very strong aftercare plans. There is no guarantee that someone will stay in recovery once they leave treatment, though research indicates the longer they are in treatment, the greater their chances.

9. WHAT DO I DO IF MY LOVED ONE RELAPSES?

- **If your loved one is physically unsafe call 911.** Safety is the first priority
- **If your loved one is safe but intoxicated, wait until they are sober and ask them what they would like to do next.** Their recovery is their responsibility. Ultimately, there is nothing you can do to get them sober. They must decide and take the action to get themselves back on track to sobriety.
- Take care of yourself. **If you are not in a safe place, remember you must consider yourself in the equation.** You cannot control your loved one, but you can ensure your own safety, and that must be a priority.