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## Helping Families— Shifting the Emphasis

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# Helping Families— Shifting the Emphasis

Joanne Nicholson, Ph.D.



Mental Illness Fellowship Victoria  
Corporate Breakfast  
May 2010

[www.parentingwell.org](http://www.parentingwell.org)



**with Karen Albert, M.S., Kathleen Biebel, Ph.D., Bernice Gershenson, M.P.H., Beth R. Hinden, Ph.D., Valerie Williams, M.A., M.S., Brenda Warren, B.S., Chip Wilder, LICSW, Toni Wolf, B.A. & Katherine Woolsey, B.A.**

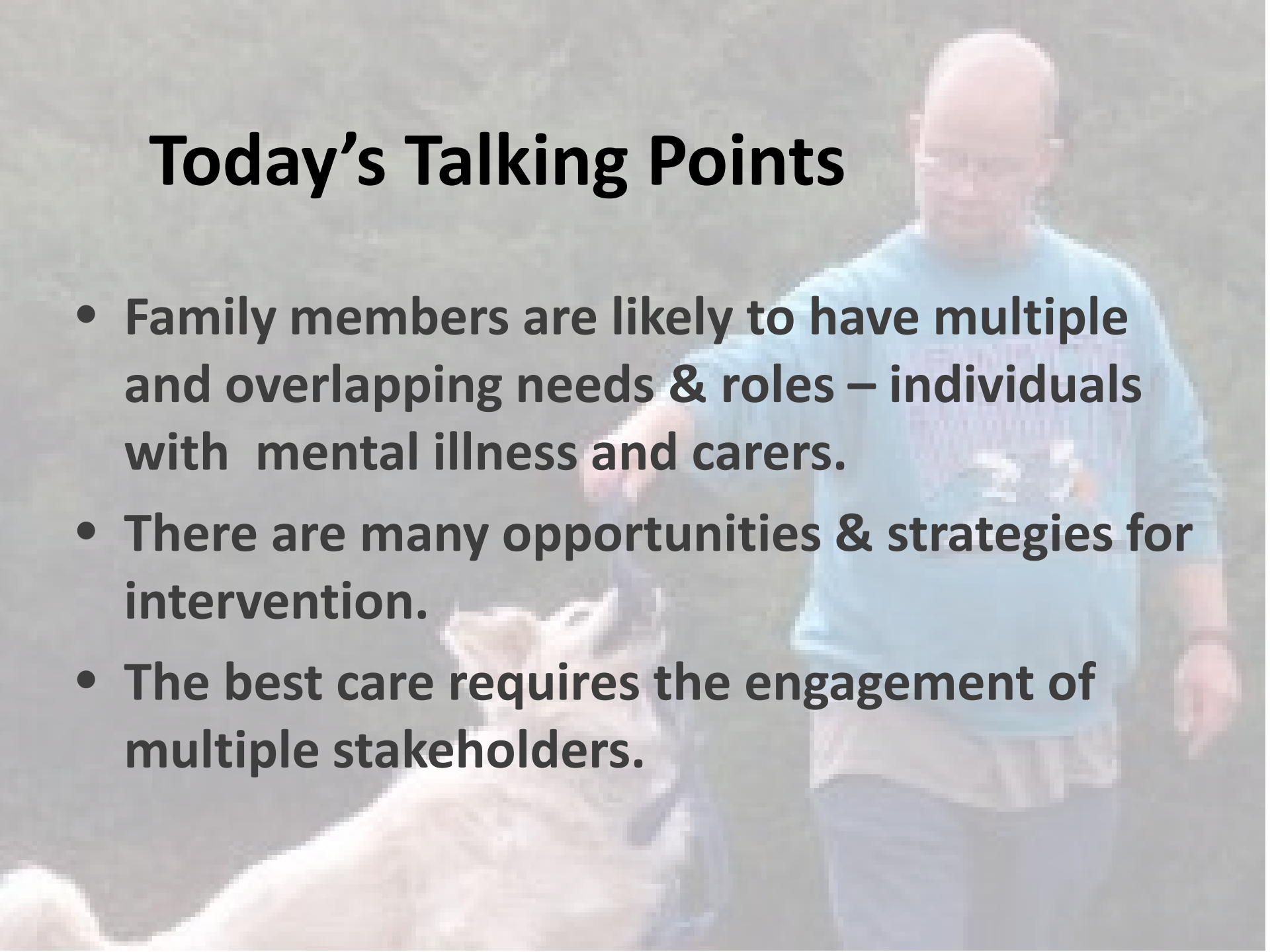
## **Disclosures**



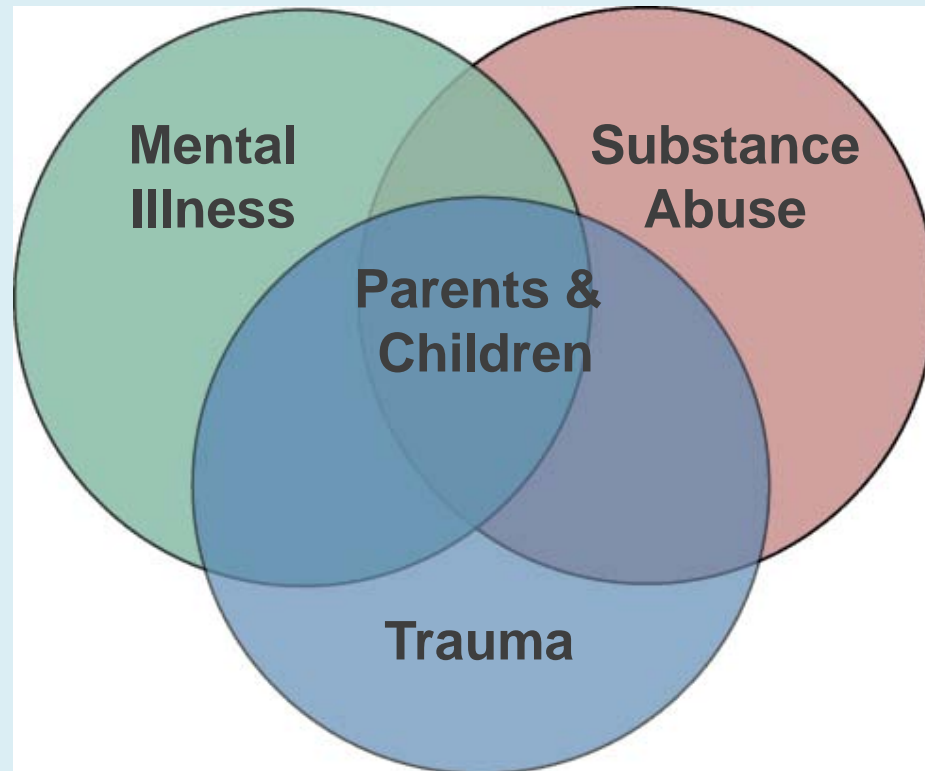
**We have received support from state, federal, and foundation sources, and from AstraZeneca for non pharmaceutical research.**

# Today's Talking Points

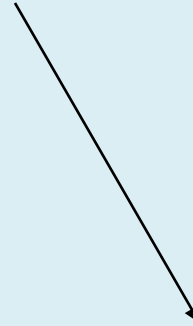
- **Family members are likely to have multiple and overlapping needs & roles – individuals with mental illness and carers.**
- **There are many opportunities & strategies for intervention.**
- **The best care requires the engagement of multiple stakeholders.**



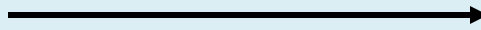
# ***A Whole-of-Family Approach: Families are the focus of mental health promotion, mental illness prevention, treatment and rehabilitation***



**Intervention**



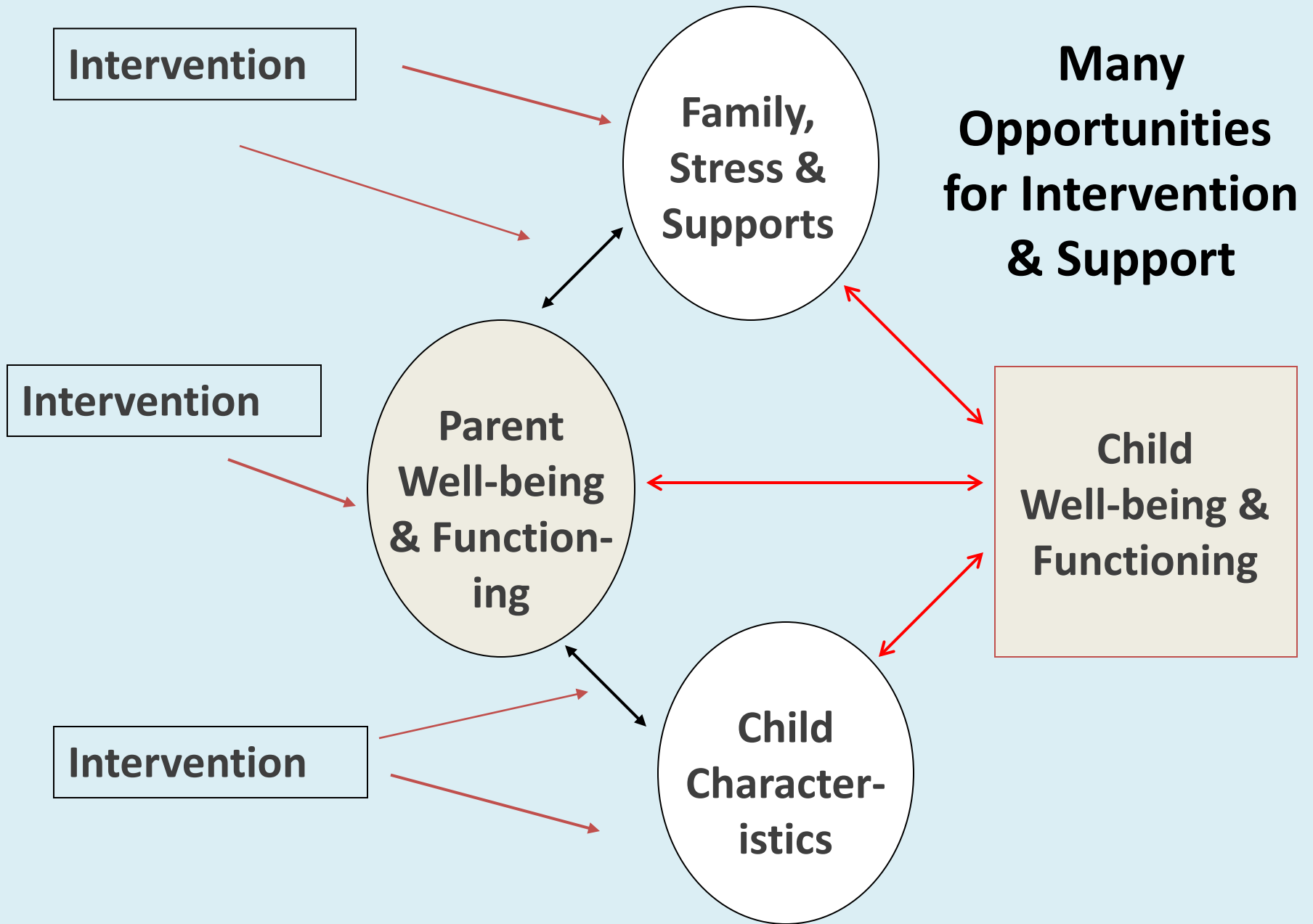
**Parent's  
Well-being &  
Functioning**



**Child  
Outcomes**



**“Old Thinking”**



# **What does it mean to serve families?**

**What skills, resources & supports can be put into place to support the optimal functioning of parents & children, & promote positive relationships in times of stability & in anticipation of times of difficulty or crisis?**



# It takes a village...

- **Multigenerational & developmental approach**
- **Recovery in adults: achieving goals & reducing adverse outcomes**
- **Resilience in children: supporting strengths & addressing needs**

**What does it take to create the village?**  
*(& not be too overwhelmed...)*

# **Our Work is Informed by Research & Practice**

- **Survey & ethnographic studies of individuals & families over time**
- **National surveys & site visit projects**
- **Development & testing of our own interventions**
- **Consultation & training to numerous federal, state & local policy makers, providers, consumers & family members**

# Key Ingredients for Success with Families when Parents have Mental Illnesses

- Family-centered
- Strengths-based
- Trauma-informed





## **Key Ingredient: Family-Centered**

- **Integration of adult & child services**
- **Interagency collaboration**
- **Funding to meet needs identified by families**

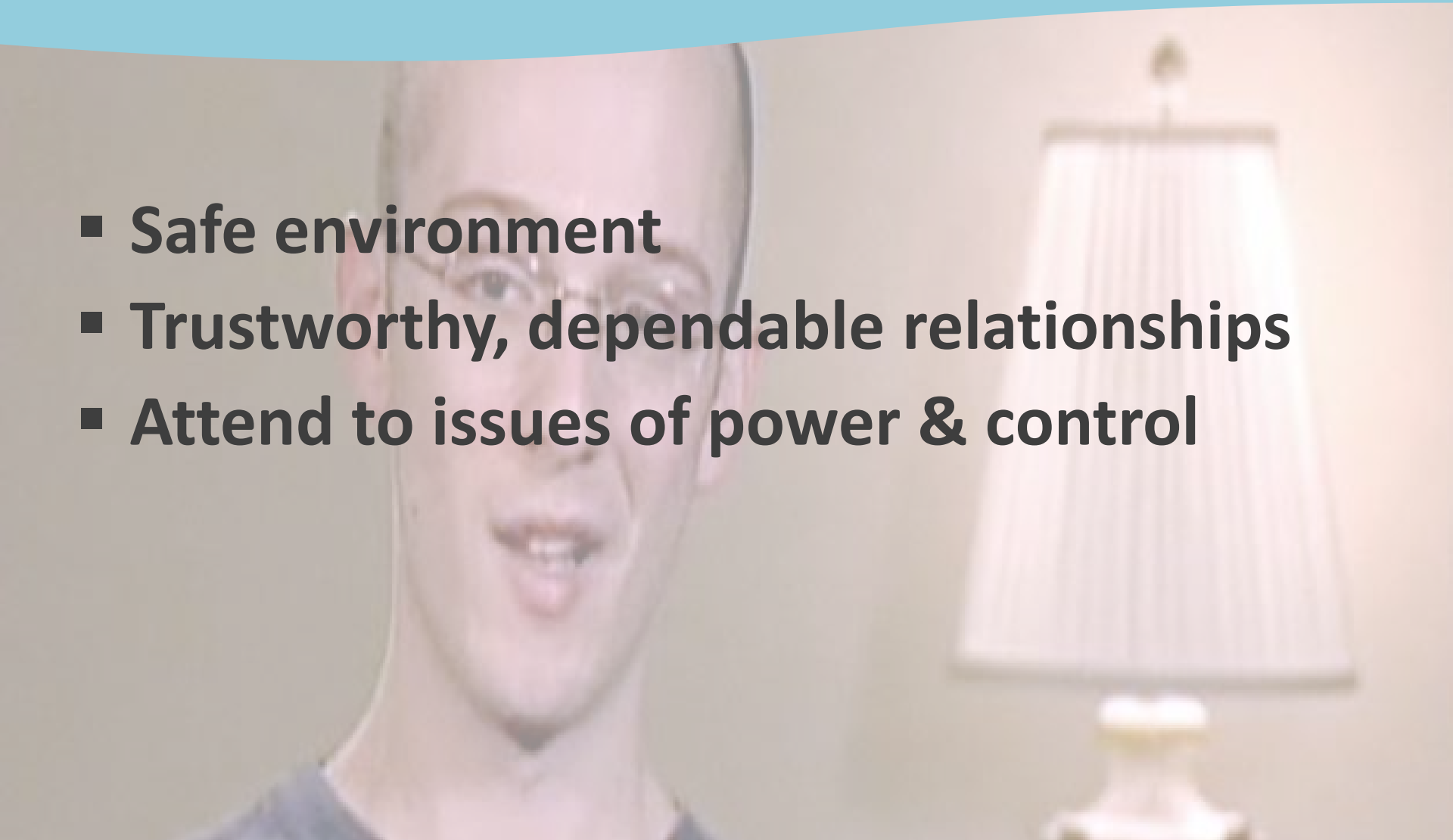
A young child with blonde hair and blue eyes, wearing denim overalls, stands in a bathroom. The floor is covered with crumpled toilet paper, suggesting a playful or messy activity. The child is looking directly at the camera with a neutral expression.

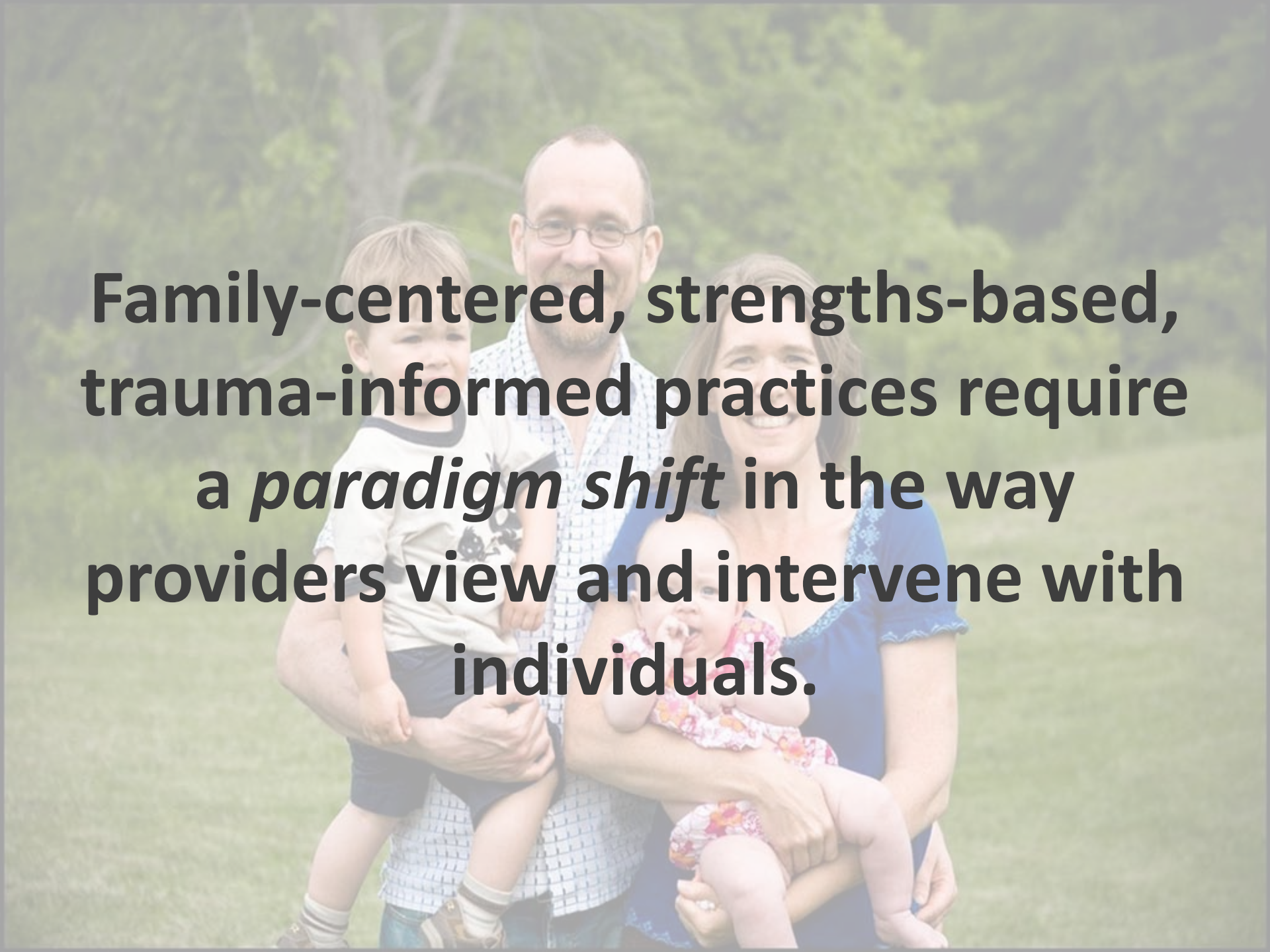
## **Key Ingredient: Strengths-Based**

- **Non-judgmental approach**
- **Support of positive role models**

# Key Ingredient: Trauma-Informed

- **Safe environment**
- **Trustworthy, dependable relationships**
- **Attend to issues of power & control**



A photograph of a family of four standing outdoors in a grassy field with trees in the background. The father, wearing glasses and a patterned shirt, is holding a young boy in a white t-shirt. The mother, wearing a blue top, is holding a baby in a floral dress. The text is overlaid on the image in a bold, black font.

**Family-centered, strengths-based, trauma-informed practices require a *paradigm shift* in the way providers view and intervene with individuals.**

# Leveraging Partnerships to Create & Coordinate Services for Families

- Changing the business we do
- Changing the way we do business







# **Create New Strategies: Family Options**

- **Recovery & resilience are family matters (family-centered, trauma-informed)**
- **Family goal planning based on strengths & needs assessment (strengths-based)**
- **Family Coaches, Program Director & Clinical Consultant (psych rehab)**
- **Family team of professional, natural & peer support providers (wraparound)**

# **The Family Options Implementation Study: The Research Question**

**What does it take to implement an intervention for families in an agency traditionally focused on providing psychiatric rehabilitation services to individual adults?**



# Implementation Study Themes: *Creating...*

- The workforce capacity
- The organizational capacity
- The community capacity



# The Workforce Capacity

- **Identify skill sets for working with families**
  - MH/Child welfare, adults and children, strengths-based, family focused services
- **Recruit staff with relevant experience**
  - Balance characteristics with credentials
- **Educate staff to intervention model**
  - Literature, researchers/consultant experts in parental mental illness, site visits
- **Develop targeted trainings to address challenges**
  - Psychosocial rehab specialists address goal planning with families

# The Organizational Capacity

- **Develop tools & resources to identify family strengths & goals**
  - Family strengths assessment form
  - Family goal form
- **Operationalize protocols & procedures**
  - Maximize what exists, e.g., petty cash
  - Develop what doesn't exist, e.g., flex funds
- **Facilitate communication pathways among ALL components of agency**
  - Internal marketing
  - Resource sharing, information exchange

# The Community Capacity

- **Locate sustainable resources for families**
  - Logistics meetings re: families' needs and strategies to access services
- **Nurture new relationships with community agencies**
  - Informational events, kick-off, trainings
- **Reinvigorate existing community relationships**
  - Reintroductions, face-to-face meetings
- **Leverage partnerships to coordinate services for families**
  - Team meetings with providers to coordinate and maximize services

A photograph of two young children smiling. The child on the left is wearing a green t-shirt with the words "happy camper" printed on it. The child on the right is wearing a white patterned shirt. The background is slightly blurred, showing what appears to be a wooden railing.

# **Enhance Existing Strategies: provide *family-informed...***


- **Supported housing**
- **Supported employment**
- **Supported education**
- **Peer support**
- **Services for children & youth**

A group of seven people, including men and women of various ages, are smiling and posing for a photo. They are wearing white t-shirts with "McGill Rowing" printed in red. The background is a light-colored wall with a framed picture.

## Some Final Suggestions:

- Integrate services, coordinate & collaborate.
- Educate colleagues in other disciplines & fields, e.g., primary care, child welfare.
- Engage key stakeholders, e.g., youth & adults, parents & family members, as partners to achieve their goals.





**“My children give me strength, they give me hope, they give me the will to survive...”**

**a mother with mental illness**

# Citation:

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