



Research in the Works



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Let's Talk About Parenting Recovery for Parents Living with Mental Illnesses

The majority of adults in the US living with mental illnesses are parents. Many of these individuals have serious mental illnesses (SMI) and receive public sector aid and services. Research has shown that the children of parents with mental health issues are at a much higher risk of developing mental health conditions themselves. Treatment plans for individuals who are parents must take into account their expectations for parenthood, and roles and responsibilities as parents, or a full recovery cannot be achieved. However, service providers often express concern that they are not prepared to work with clients who are parents, feeling they lack the necessary tools and skills to identify and meet their needs.

Let's Talk About Parenting (LTP) supports providers to explore the experiences and impact of parenthood and family life on adult clients and to identify their goals and needs, keeping parenthood and family life in mind. LTP is an adaptation of the Finnish Let's Talk model, an evidence-based psychosocial intervention to assist adult clients/parents with mental illness to identify and meet the needs of their children. The goals of LTP are to:

- Increase the capacity of providers working with adults to explore and deal with their clients' parenting and family experiences, and factor these into their treatment and recovery plans;
- Improve proximal outcomes for parents with mental illnesses by promoting hope and the treatment alliance, enhancing parenting self-efficacy, and reducing parenting stress; and
- Contribute to longer-term positive outcomes for both parents and children.



The goal of LTP is improved outcomes (e.g. enhanced well-being and increased functioning) for the adult parents. The longer-term goal is to have a positive impact on the parents' children. Early intervention with parents and, therefore, prevention or earlier intervention for children, have the potential for lifelong improvements for all involved.

Initial activities of the LTP project include:

- Identifying federal, state and local needs and barriers to determine the fit of the LTP model in Massachusetts;
- Surveying state mental health authorities to examine national-level responses to the issue;
- Adapting the LTP intervention guide for use by providers;
- Presenting LTP recommendations to key Massachusetts DMH/EOHHS stakeholders; and
- Partnering with implementation stakeholders including providers, parents, and DMH/EOHHS representatives throughout LTP activities.

LTP is a collaboration between investigators at the UMass Medical School Systems and Psychosocial Advances Research Center (Kathleen Biebel, PhD), the Dartmouth Psychiatric Research Center (Joanne Nicholson, PhD), and the MA Department of Mental Health Children's Behavioral Health Knowledge Center (Kelly English, PhD, LICSW; Margaret Guyer-Deason, PhD; Sandra Wixted, MA). This project is funded by the MA Department of Mental Health Children's Behavioral Health Knowledge Center.

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