

What The Orientation Guide Can Do For Families

(Orientation Guide to Child/Youth Mental Health & Substance Use Services)

The *Orientation Guide* is another tool for your tool box when you're working with youth, parents and Families. We are parents with lived experience from the Comox Valley and Campbell River Local Action Teams, and we would like to share with you some things we have learned about using the Guide to further support Families. Please note the word "parents" refers to all caregivers of a child/youth.

"The Orientation Guide" is about ...

Educating & supporting parents

- familiarize yourself with *the Guide* and Table of Contents so you can direct parents to the section(s) of *the Guide* that you think will help them most
- instead of providing them with a copy of the Guide, you can print online section(s) that's of importance to the Parent/Family. Or, give them a card with the link, or write the link down for them:
<http://forcesociety.org/orientation-guide>
- use a highlighter or post it notes to flag pages or content that's of particular use to the Family

Using the right language

- avoid acronyms, and "shop talk." If you do catch yourself using an acronym, take the time to fully explain
- if you're referring to a service that's mentioned in the Guide, **please use the full name of the agency.**
- The Guide was written by Families, For Families. It was written in language that most parents can understand.

Linking us to services

- if referring to mental health services provided by the Ministry of Children & Family Development, or suggesting their services, **PLEASE** specify this is **NOT** child protection services you are talking about, and this may need to be reiterated many times.
- please keep in mind, that when parents come in asking for help, that they carry a history with them. Families may not disclose all their history, so accepting them where they are at that moment helps create a connection with them.
- when suggesting or referring a Family to a Service Provider, be prepared to give them a brief overview of that agency, **show them the page in the Guide** that explains the agency. Remember that the parent may not know anything about what agencies exist in the community, or what those agencies do for Families and youth. Use a highlighter or post it notes to flag pages or content that's of particular use to the Family
- take a moment to write your suggestions or referrals or contact information on the **blank pages at the back of the Guide.**

Giving us connection

- using the phrase "If there is anything I can do just let me know " with the parent is powerful. This creates a connection between the parent and Service Provider and helps develop trust.
- at the time you ask any question, the parent may not know how to answer, or what they need. They may even be shocked that you asked! But they will remember you asked. You may need to ask this question many times before they know the answer, but it will get the parent thinking in a proactive way about what they need. This question also helps to empower the parent and invites them to return to you at a later time. This question can be asked at the time the Guide is given and at the end of the meeting.

Giving us hope

- most parents understand you can't always fix their challenges. But the fact that you're holding a space to hear the parent for a few minutes supports the parent and their Family. When they leave the office, the parent knows that support is still there. This leaves a door open for us, providing us hope.
- support/connection is a little nugget that parents can put in their pocket and take with them; it doesn't have to mean 24/7 support from you – it means they know that your support exists. **It leaves the door open.**

Empowering us

- the more a parent is empowered, the more hope there is for wellness in the Family. And the more a Service Provider empowers a parent, the more the parent feels they are a team with the Service Provider
- this *Orientation Guide* helps parents navigate the complex child/youth mental health system, and allows them to feel less alone.
- respect where the parent is at the moment because chances are that you're not seeing them at their best. Understand that previous experiences or circumstances may have led them to where we are now.
- refer parents to FORCE Society For Kids' Mental Health / Institute of Families for support and further resources 1-855-887-8004.

Thank You to the parents in both communities who have generously shared their wisdom about how the Guide can be best used to engage other parents in the child/youth mental health system. Thank you to the Campbell River LAT and Comox Valley Local Action Teams for their generous funding that has allowed us to print many copies of the "Orientation Guide" for both our communities. It is because of this funding that we are able to provide many more Service Providers with copies. This event is supported by the Campbell River and Comox Valley Local Action Teams, as part of the Child and Youth Mental Health and Substance use (CYMHSU) Collaborative, funded in partnership by Doctors of BC and the BC Government.



"Connection is what holds Hope together." (Suzy Venuta, Parent, Early Childhood Educator, Advocate)