Institute for Advancements in Mental Health

Research Snapshot:
Enhancing Support For Family Caregivers Of People Living With Serious Mental Illness

Identified Research Gaps

- The demand for caregiving for individuals living with serious mental illnesses is intensifying, with record-high demands during the COVID-19 pandemic
- Yet, despite the integral role these family caregivers play in the well-being of the mentally ill, sustainable support structures are notably insufficient

Research Methods

- Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 25 participants (family caregivers and mental health service providers) across Canada.
- The study utilized a participatory research design approach to explore family caregivers' and relevant provincial/territorial * partners perspectives of how best to support family caregivers in their role as caregivers of people living with serious mental illnesses

Research Findings

Structured Peer Support

While participants identified peer support as the most support they have received, they pointed out the need for structured peer support programs across provinces

Service Navigation

In provinces where service navigators are already incorporated in the mental health system, employing and training more system navigators will be a great way to sustain support

Discharge Planning

Caregivers need a roadmap from the point of diagnosis to after care as there is neither adequate follow up nor a proper plan, hence the "revolving door"

Mental Health and the Justice System

"For caregivers, where the system fails them too is that the lower courts in the criminal system do not handle mental health" hence the need for continuous mental health training of law enforcement officers

Funding

There needs to be organization of mental health funding. "Policymakers and government talk a lot about putting money into mental health but where is it going?"

* Although, the IAM team worked closely with mental health organizations from the Territories to co-design the research study, interview participants were unavailable to participate in the study