

Guidelines for Communicating with Family Members

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A Local Context

- St. Joe's is a large general hospital serving the Hamilton, Niagara, Haldimand, Brant regions (HNHB LHIN).
- The Mental Health and Addiction Program (MHAP) is the largest Program in the hospital and provides specialized inpatient & outpatient services to Adults (18+) to our LHIN.
- Services include: Psychiatric Emergency Services, 3 Acute Mental Health Inpatient Units (72 beds), 14 Specialized / Tertiary Care Units (24 beds each), Concurrent Inpatient Unit (24 beds)
- Outpatient clinics include: Anxiety, Eating Disorders, Early Intervention, Schizophrenia, Mood Disorders, Forensics, Seniors Mental Health, 4 ACT Teams, Women's & Men's Substance Use, Dual Diagnosis and 2 general mental health clinics.

An Ongoing Issue

- Families consistently identify that lack of communication by the clinical team during episodes of care is a significant barrier.
- Staff consistently identify a lack of clarity around applying rules of consent and confidentiality and therefore, are on the safe side and limit their communication with families
- People with lived experience as service users consistently identify concerns around having their rights breached in regards to sharing of information with others.

Call for Action

In response to a tragic event, St. Joseph's Healthcare Hamilton received a recommendation from the Coroner as follows:

“We recommend that where family involvement is accepted by the person receiving services, that St. Joseph's Mental Health and Addiction Program increase the communication with the family as to the plan of care prior to the expiration or change of a “Form 1” and/or “Form 3”.”

Our Response

- Development of Guidelines for Staff that go beyond the Coroner's recommendations
- Groups consulted included:
 - Family Advisory Council for the MHAP
 - Peer Support Council for the MHAP
 - Frontline clinical staff
 - MHAP leadership

The Guidelines: General Principles

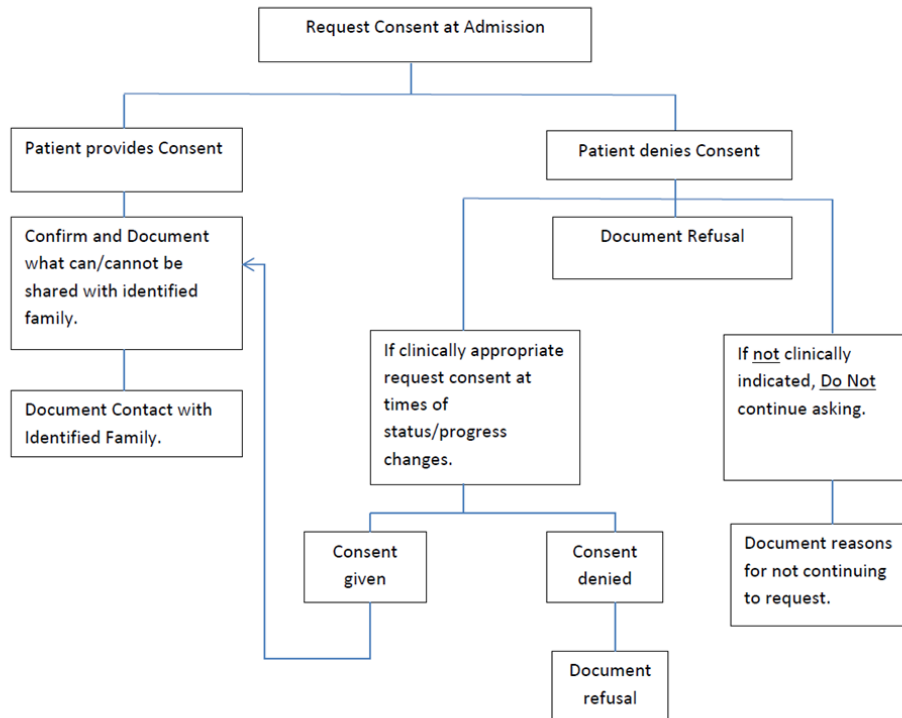
- With the consent of the person receiving services, family should be advised, as soon as possible, of changes in the care plan and any changes in the person receiving services status while in hospital.
- The person receiving services has the right to grant or deny consent for family involvement and release of information to family members at any time, except in such circumstances wherein the family member has been appointed as the Substitute Decision Maker.

The Guidelines: Major Elements

- Major Elements
 - Seeking consent
 - Repeating requests for consent over time
 - Communicating to families with consent
 - Communicating to families without consent
 - Receiving information from families
 - Documentation

APPENDIX A

OBTAINING CONSENT TO SHARE INFORMATION WITH IDENTIFIED FAMILY**



REMEMBER: Staff may receive information from identified family without consent.

Staff cannot provide confidential information regarding care or progress without consent of patient.

** Family: defined as any individual(s) who is identified by the person living with mental illness/addiction as being a significant support in their life. Family members have a wealth of experience with their loved one that can help to inform and influence care. They also have a strong interest in the well-being of their loved one and many feel that as a family member, they have a 'right' and a 'need' to know about the person receiving services including progress and status changes. However, family members must respect the wishes of the person receiving services and recognize the constraints imposed by Ontario's privacy legislation.

Next Steps

- Individual service users & family representatives to develop and lead staff education/roll out strategy with support of nurse educator.
- Development of signage to be placed in both inpatient/outpatient settings .
- In partnership with service users, families and Chief Privacy Officer, develop:
 - Statement around sharing of information for all inpatient/outpatient orientation packages
 - Guide for patients and family members about obtaining and providing information.



Contact Information

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