Communicating with the Health Team

Helpful Hints

1. It is now Queensland Government policy for clinicians ‘to make a conscious effort to look for opportunities to share information in ways that will benefit the consumer’s recovery and support the safety and well-being of others’ (Information sharing between mental health workers, consumers, carers, family and significant others, Qld Health, 2011).

2. Policy now encourages mental health and addiction staff to partner with consumers, carers, family and significant others and to include their involvement in developing a:
   - Recovery Plan
   - Relapse Prevention Plan
   - Family Support Plan

ASK to be involved

3. Aim to be calm, clear and concise when communicating with members of the health team. Carefully consider what you communicate. Health professionals make notes in the medical file about the ill person you care for, family interactions and history.

4. To minimise misinterpretations, check back, before ending conversations, to ensure that your message has been understood correctly.

5. It can be helpful, before any meeting, to dot point what is important for you to know or share. It is your choice whether you hand over what you write. If you give your document to a clinician, keep a copy.

6. Examples of questions you might like to ask are:
   - What do I need to know about my relative’s illness?
   - Who will be involved in the treatment and who will be my key contact?
   - What medication is being prescribed and what are the possible side effects?
   - How can I best be of assistance? (Suggested do’s and don’ts)
   - What’s my role as a partner in my family member’s recovery?
   - After discharge who should we contact if we are worried?

7. Queensland health workers are being trained and encouraged to use SBAR for communication and you may find it useful to use the same process.
   - S = Situation
     Introduce yourself and state the current problem
   - B = Background
     Give only what is relevant to the current situation
   - A = Assessment
     What is YOUR assessment of the situation
   - R = Recommendation
     Give your suggested action and/or your request