

Caregivers benefit from a first episode psychosis family peer bridger program.

Final Results from a Family Bridger Pilot Program for Caregivers of Loved Ones with Early Psychosis: Experiences, Feasibility, and Future Directions

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INTRO



For individuals with first episode psychosis (FEP), engagement of caregivers in treatment is associated with better clinical outcomes; however, caregivers report high rates of burnout.



This project piloted and evaluated a "Family Bridger" (FB) program, in which caregivers of individuals experiencing FEP were matched with a trained family peer (FB) for one-on-one support, psychoeducation and skill-building.

METHODS



N = 11 caregivers, 3 FBs who met up to 10 times across 20 weeks.



Interviewed at midpoint and endpoint via a semi-structured interview including Likert-style questions to better understand their experience in the program, the feasibility of participating, and suggested improvements.



Analyzed using Thematic Analysis.

Working with Family Bridgers

- Shared experiences destigmatized psychosis and reduced sense of isolation
- Reciprocal relationship was empowering and affirming in a healthcare setting

"There's a lot of people who love us a lot, who really love us and absolutely feel so helpless. Just don't know how to help. And so for someone to have experience with this, makes a huge difference because there's an understanding that comes with that."

Positive Outcomes

- Improved communication skills and knowledge about psychosis
- More positive family social environment

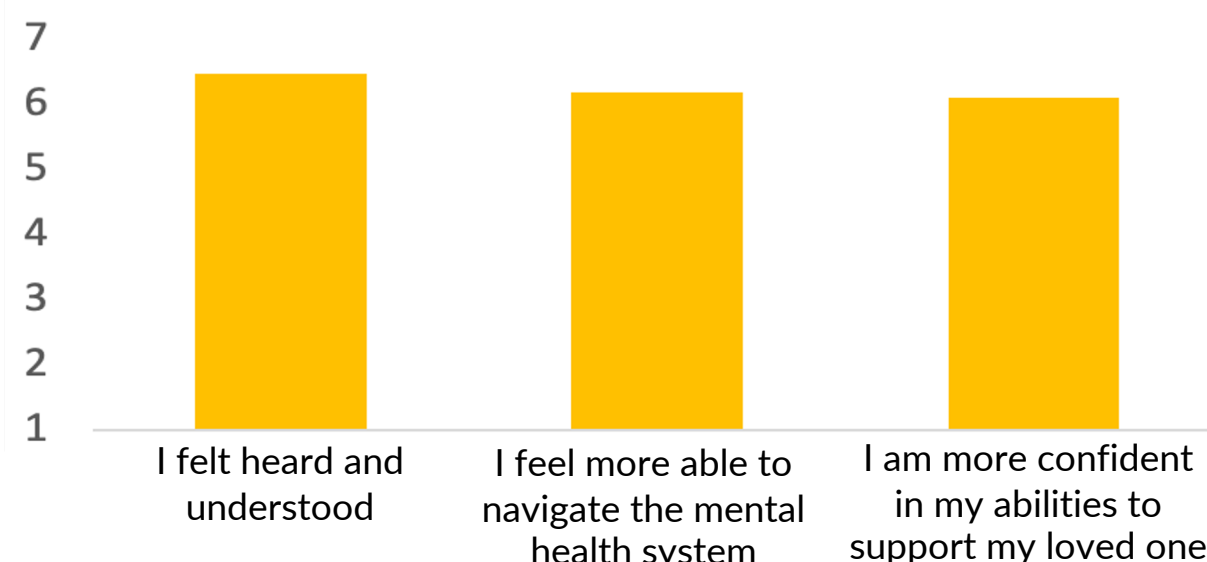
"It has opened up a whole new world for me. The more you know, the more you can grow... I know it's not my fault. It's not [my son's] fault. We are just walking this journey together."

Hopes for the Future

- Earlier access to FB in hospital during FEP
- More time with the FB and more resources/ support at the end of participation

"It would have been nice if there was a family bridger contact at the hospital because it just kind of felt like we were drowning... there was no one there to give us support."

ENDPOINT QUANTITATIVE RESULTS



DISCUSSION



Participation in a Family Bridger program is beneficial, feasible and acceptable for caregivers of individuals with FEP.



These results can help guide future development and implementation of Family Bridger programs to meet the needs of families across service settings.