

Key Information for Family Assessment Related to Mental Health for the Parent and Attached list of Solution Focused Questions

Handout 2-1 B

1. What are the family factors that promote the parent's ability to safely care for the child? Such as:
 - Support from another family member
 - Established coping mechanisms
 - Parent's ability to work with the local service providers and natural supports to address the child's and family's needs.
 - Involvement in a religious or other organization that provides support
 - Regular contact with the child's medical doctor or other specialists.
 - Access to parent support groups
 - Family members have not experienced abuse, neglect in their childhood
2. What questions would you consider asking the family members regarding the parent's behaviors and emotional state?
3. What are some of the caregiver (parent with mental disorder) characteristics that would serve as protective factors and promote safety for the children? Such as:
 - Parent has an appropriate understanding of the developmental level of the child and what to expect from the child at that age.
 - Parent has fair to good coping skills and is able to manage her behavior around her children.
 - Parent has a fair to good understanding of her mental illness and recognizes when she needs additional assistance.
 - Parent has an advanced directive or safety plan for when her symptoms escalate and when she may need psychiatric assistance.
 - Parent has not displayed serious violence in the past, has not been seriously paranoid, and delusions have not included thoughts about her children or such conditions are under control and have been for sometime.
 - Has the ability to problem solve, and understands that the mental illness could have an impact on her children.
4. What are some of the family factors or personal characteristics that could increase risk?

5. Are there any child factors that could appropriately serve as protective factors?
Such as:
 - Age of child when the onset occurred
 - Children's relationship with siblings and other peers
 - Children's relationship with other adults
 - Current age of children
 - Child understands the parent's mental illness
 - Child understands how to respond when parent's symptoms are escalating
 - Child expresses connectedness with parent
6. Are there co-existing situations with the children or parent(s) that could exacerbate the symptoms? Such as:
 - Use of substances
 - Domestic Violence with a partner
 - Unusually high level of stress
 - Recent traumatic event
 - Medical complications or intellectual disabilities
7. What is the parenting relationship like? Such as:
 - Parent has practical parenting skills
 - Parent and child have an adequate attachment and connectedness
 - Parent appears flexible and able to attend to a young child's cues or an older child's request for attention and assistance
 - Discipline techniques are not overly harsh or punitive
 - Parent see parenting in a positive light