

# What is Family Engagement in Child and Youth Mental Health?



A Family Engagement initiative started in Peel Region in 2017 and is in the process of being launched. Family members and service providers are working together to develop some guidelines to increase the engagement of family members in the system and the following 6 organizations offering child and youth mental health in Peel.



## What is Family Engagement?

“An active partnership between families and service providers that involves listening to what families have to say, engaging in two-way communication and seeing the families as partners and allies in children and youth’s mental health”\*

## What is a family?

“A circle of care and support offering enduring commitment to care for one another related either biologically, emotionally or legally and takes into account those who the client or person with lived experience identifies as significant to his/her well-being”\*

*Families have expert knowledge of both their child and the mental health system where they access services. Therefore, it is essential that the voices of families are heard, and that they influence and impact change in that system.*

*The ultimate goal is to make the system, programs and services better!*

*“If we don’t speak up, our voices will never be heard. It is our voices that will project change.”*

*“As a parent on the Family Engagement Development Group, I have an adolescent currently living in a treatment facility who is struggling with major mental health issues. I am feeling very powerless in the way of helping her. This initiative provides me an opportunity to help that gives me some satisfaction and allows me to feel as if I am contributing in a positive way.”*

**To learn more about this initiative or to get involved,  
contact Stephanie Bush, Family Engagement Coordinator, at  
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\* Source of definitions: [Developing a Family Engagement Model, Summary of the Literature](#). The Ontario Centre of Excellence for Child and Youth Mental Health, February 2017.