

# Virginia Family Network & Youth MOVE Virginia

*Supporting one family at a time while advocating for many*



# What is Virginia Family Network

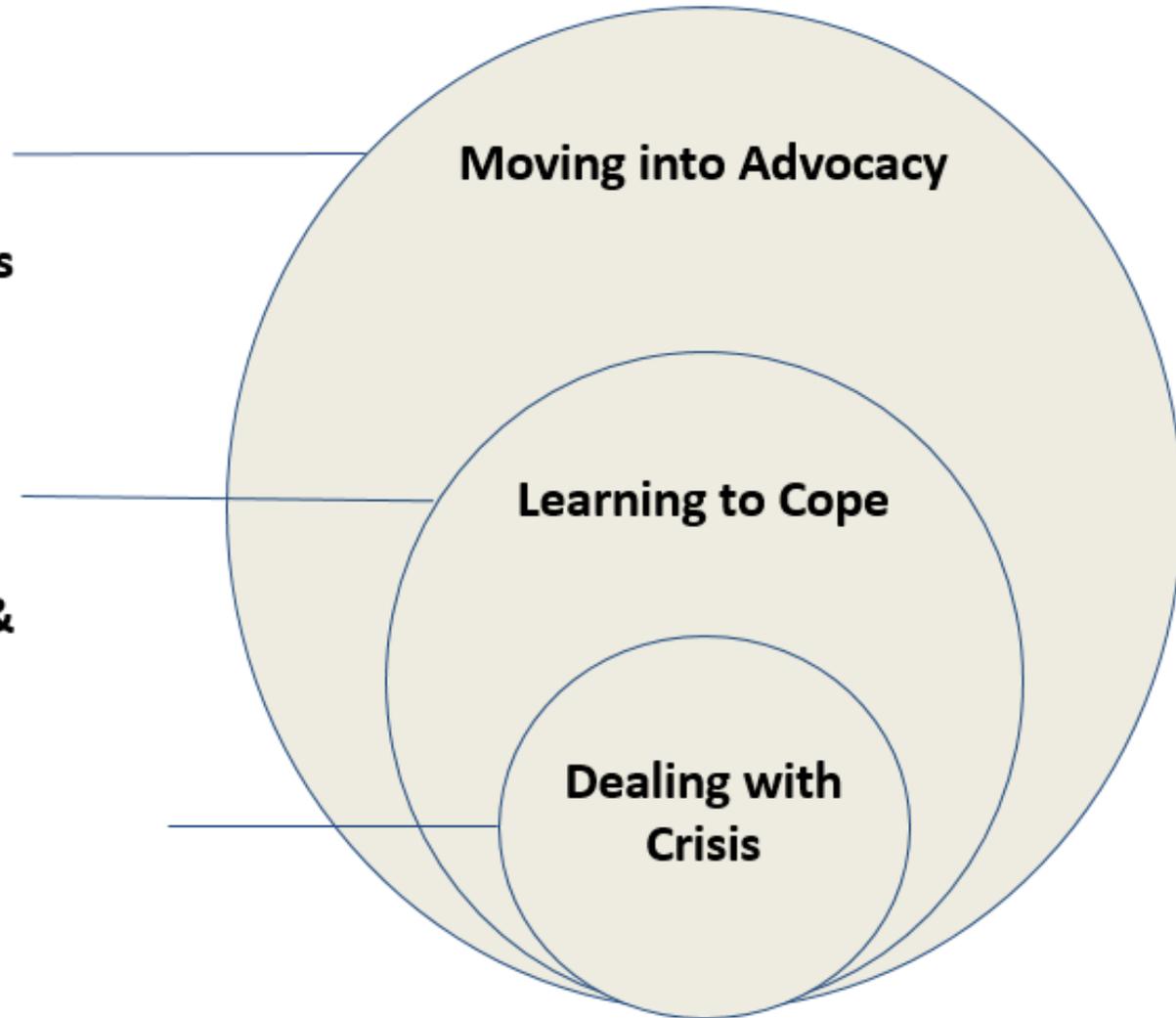
- A grassroots network of families who are committed to providing opportunities that support, educate, and empower other families with children and youth with mental health or co-occurring needs while also promoting family driven and youth guided policy throughout the child serving systems.
- Designed to “meet the family where they are” through activities such as providing support groups, training, resources, and mentorship
- Overseen by a parent advisory board
- Launched in 2011 under NAMI Virginia thanks to funding from DBHDS

# Empowerment Continuum

**Connected/Resilient/Informed**  
Restore balance, system  
responsive to needs, opportunities  
to find meaning, HOPE!

**Confusion/grief/overwhelmed**  
Need self-care, support network  
for venting, broader information &  
skills, HOPE!

**Isolated/scared/helpless**  
Need support & comfort, targeted  
guidance & information, HOPE!



# VFN is Peer Support Driven

Family leaders are unique and a critical component to moving parents towards resiliency by helping them move through or bounce back quicker from difficult situations:

- Offer more authentic empathy and validation
- Offering practical advice and strategy suggestions that professionals may not know or cannot
- Helping rebuilds a sense of community especially after having a disconnecting experience

# What VFN Offers

## **Dealing with Crisis/Learning to Cope**

- Local parent support groups and educational workshops (Done in a Day)
- Online resources – newsletter, targeted fact sheets, Facebook
- Annual Statewide Family and Youth Leadership Summit

## **Moving into Advocacy**

- Advanced Parent Leadership Training - focuses on foundational skills relevant to being a parent leader
- Learning and Leadership Scholarships – funds to pursue a diverse array of leadership development towards informing the child serving system
- Parent Retreat – continuing education opportunities for parent leaders

# What is Youth MOVE Virginia

(Motivating Others through Voices of Experience)

- Statewide network for youth and young adults with mental health and co-occurring needs
- Part of National Organization, Youth MOVE
- Committed to opportunities that support and empower youth and young adults while promoting youth voice throughout the system
- Meet youth where they are through mentorship, support groups, trainings, and resources
- Overseen by a youth advisory board, consisting of 15 youth and young adults with various levels of experience with mental health
- Launched in 2012 under NAMI Virginia thanks to funding from DBHDS

# 7 C's Framework

Concept towards building strategies for healthy resilience so youth/young adults can bounce back and process trauma or stress response more quickly in the future

Control

Connection

Coping

Character

Contribution

Confidence

Competence

# What YMV Offers

**Control, connection, coping, character (young adults utilized in leading initiatives → contribution, confidence, competence)**

- Local youth groups, NAMI on Campus and workshops/presentations (Done in a Day)
- Online resources – newsletter, targeted fact sheets, Facebook
- High School and Middle School Youth Track at the Annual Statewide Family and Youth Leadership Summit
- Advanced Youth Leadership Training - focuses on foundational skills relevant to being a youth/young adult leader
- Learning and Leadership Scholarships – funds to pursue a diverse array of leadership development towards informing the child serving system
- Young Adult Retreat – continuing education opportunities for parent leaders

# The Value of Peer Support in the Process

- Create vehicle to channel negative experiences to positive or productive uses
- Opportunities to become positive role model for peers and develop sense of community
- Having walked along the same road, parents/caregivers/youth/young adults can share their lessons learned
- Offer hope for improved personal and family functioning and balance

# How Does VFN/YMA Support CSA Efforts?

CSA Code – ***to create a collaborative system of services and funding that is child-centered, family focused and community-based***

- Complements your coordinated array of services, by offering peers support, learning and mentorship which is unique and essential to family resiliency
- Provides the ongoing support, training and mentorship that can assist in preparing parents to be at a point where they are ready to give back in a meaningful and productive way for your FAPT/CPMT
- Assist you in bringing in local peer support and learning opportunities to strengthen community-based resources/services
- Inform your policies, practices and service delivery

# Successful Parent Peer Support

Delivered by parents who have children and youth with mental health or co-occurring needs who are **ready to use their experience** to support other parents as indicated by:

- Relative stability in own family functioning
- Strong support and coping/problem solving strategies
- Self-awareness/insight
- Perspective that personal situation isn't unique and understands the need for system improvement in a collaborative process

# Family Driven Care (System of Care)

Family-driven means families have a primary decision making role in the care of their own children as well as the policies and procedures governing care for all children in their community, state, tribe, territory and nation. This includes:

- Choosing culturally and linguistically competent supports, services, and providers;
- Setting goals;
- Designing, implementing and evaluating programs;
- Monitoring outcomes; and
- Partnering in funding decisions.

# Some of the Ways this Could Change the Way We Work with Families

- Service determined by professionals → partnership with families
- Only professional services → diverse services including natural supports
- Service silos and multiple case managers → coordinated care
- Deficits model → strengths model
- Family blaming → family strengthening
- Mono cultural → cultural competence

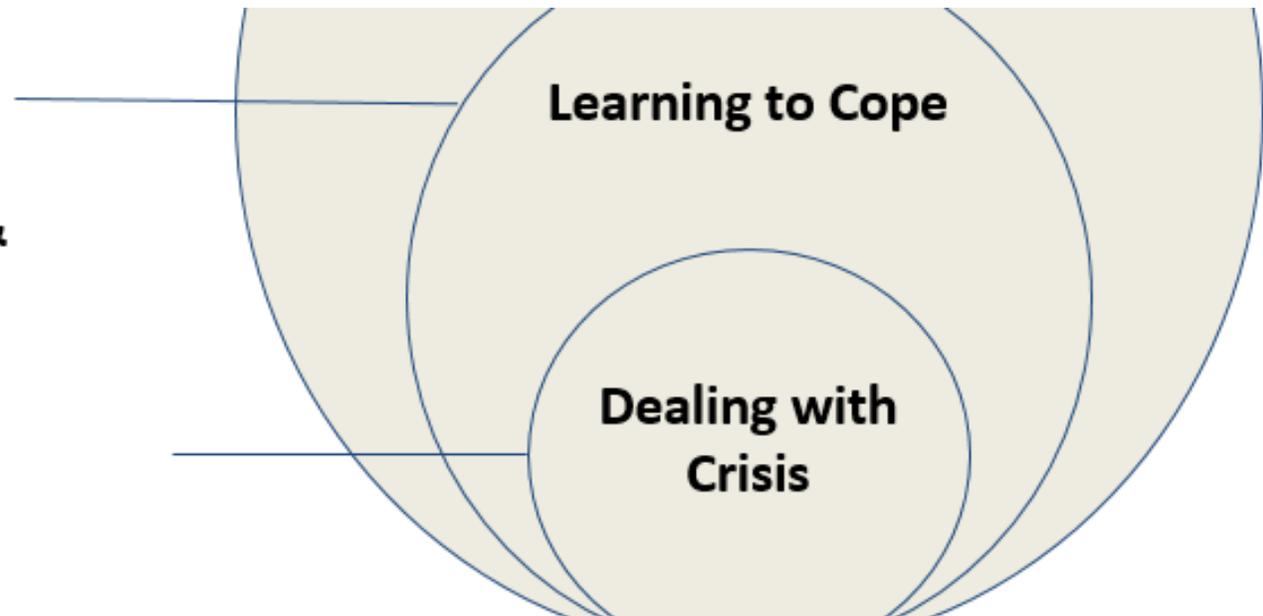
# Address What Families in Crisis Need

***What behaviors and tactics can you employ in your local CSA FAPT/CPMT approach to help the team navigate this need facing the family?***

***What community partners can you take advantage of to further assist your efforts?***

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# Address the Inherent Power Differential

- To the parent, you are the gatekeeper to a resource, their family needs. They need you, you don't need them. You hold all the cards.
- They won't know why you would want to help them, unless you take the time to engage, connect and inform them. Taking time to build rapport, level the playing field (knowledge and decision making options) is critical to getting the best outcome for the family and CSA

# Address the Assumptions Parents have about Professionals:

- They don't listen to my opinions.
- Their decisions are made before I even get to the meeting.
- They don't respect me.
- They think I'm a bad parent.
- They blame me for my child's behavior.
- They don't understand what it's like at home.
- They don't realize I have other kids in the house who need things.
- They don't realize I'm overwhelmed.
- They don't see me as a real member of the team.

# Address the Assumptions Professionals have about Parents:

- They don't understand the limitations of my job/the system.
- They don't really want to try something new to make this situation better.
- They don't respect the work I do.
- They don't know how to parent effectively.
- They don't really care about the child.
- They have a mental illness, too—that's where the kid gets it.
- They don't see me as a real member of their team.

# To this End, Remember: Everyone Wants to Feel

- Valued
- Listened to and heard
- Less guilt, less blamed
- Confident
- Knowledgeable
- Proactive (vs. Reactive)
- Assertive (vs. Aggressive)
- Informed
- Involved/included in a meaningful way
- That they are regarded as an expert in their own unique field
- Hopefulness for the child's future

# Common Ground: Both want Children & Youth to be Successful...they simply have *Different, but Critical Roles* in Achieving that Goal

For example:

- An educator sees a student in danger of dropping out
- A juvenile justice staff sees a potential runaway or delinquent
- A clinician sees a client with mental health issues
- Families see their children as people first, their special needs come second. This is what makes family involvement and leaders unique and a critical component!

# Tips for Promoting Family Engagement

## **Principles of parent support practice**

- Staff and families work together in relationships based on equality and respect
- Staff enhances families' capacity to support the growth and development of all family members
- Programs affirm and strengthen families' cultural, racial and linguistic identities
- Programs are flexible and responsive to emerging family and community issues
- Principles of family support are modeled in all program activities

# Tips for Promoting Family Engagement

## **Principles of parent support practice**

- Practitioners work with families to mobilize formal/informal resources to support family development
- Programs are embedded in communities and contribute to community building
- Programs advocate with families for services and systems that are fair, responsive and accountable to families served

# Peer Support can be Critical for CSA Success

- The peer principle - finding affiliation with someone with similar life experience and having an equal relationship
- The helper principle - the notion that being helpful to someone else is also self healing
- Empowerment - choice, decision making opportunities, skill development, positive risk taking, reciprocity, support, sense of community, self help, and developing awareness
- Advocacy - finding hope and believing that change and improved functioning is possible; taking personal responsibility for making it happen

# Questions?

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