

Publicity Efforts

The truism, “If we build it, they will come,” simply does NOT apply to family programming! Of all the tasks associated with preparing for and implementing family education, publicity requires the most creativity, time, and persistence. Many sites have invested large amounts of resources, time, and energy to create family programming, only to be disappointed by low participation. While a full analysis of the barriers to family engagement is beyond the scope of this manual, some creative approaches have been described in the literature (e.g., Dixon et al., 1999; Glynn et al., 2006; Sherman & Carothers, 2005; Sherman, Fischer, Bowling, Ridener & Harrison, manuscript in preparation, 2007).

Publicizing the SAFE program is an ongoing effort. It’s helpful to have several champions—preferably in each mental health unit—who can help create referrals. The facility recovery coordinator can also increase awareness of the program.

Three handouts are used to promote this series:

- [SAFE Program pamphlet](#)
- [SAFE Program annual schedule](#)
- [SAFE Program monthly flyer](#)

Information is disseminated to three sets of people:

- To eligible family members
- To veterans enrolled in mental health treatment programs
- To VA Medical Center and community providers who can share this resource with families

Program Information for Family Members

1. Informational letters were sent to all family members who had completed the needs assessment. (See “[Invitation Letter](#),” p. 31).
2. A pamphlet is given to family members and friends of veterans upon a veteran’s admission to the inpatient psychiatric unit. Social workers and psychiatric residents also share information with family members upon the veteran’s discharge from the unit.
3. Reminder letters are sent 1 week before each session to family members who have attended a SAFE Program workshop in the past 6 months. (See “[Reminder Letter](#),” p. 32).

Program Information for Veterans (Veterans are asked to share this resource with family members or friends who may be interested)

1. The following information is placed on the bottom of all appointment letters from the outpatient Ambulatory Mental Health Clinic:

**New SAFE Program for Family Members Only
Support And Family Education: Mental Health Facts for Families**

**Monday, March 8, 2:30-4:00pm, GA104
This month's workshop: "What causes mental illness?"
No reservation needed**

Call Dr. Sherman for additional information: (405) 456-5183

2. The availability of the program is announced, and pamphlets are distributed during the first week of the Ambulatory Mental Health Clinic's monthly psychoeducational classes (e.g., Depression Management, Anxiety Management).
3. Brief presentations are made regularly in various mental health programs (including the PTSD Program, Substance Abuse Program, Day Treatment Center).
4. Regular presentations are provided for the Mental Health Consumer Council.
5. Flyers are posted throughout the medical center several days before each workshop.

Program Information for VA Providers and Other Referral Sources

1. Informational letters and pamphlets were distributed to many VAMC providers in the early stages of program development. Annual schedules are also disseminated to educate staff about the program.
2. A brief overview of the program was presented to the primary care providers at the medical center.
3. A presentation to the Patient Education Committee informed them of the nature of the SAFE program.
4. Articles have been published in various newsletters, including the newsletter of the state psychological association, the *MIRECC Communique* electronic newsletter, and local psychology service electronic meetings.
5. Home health aid providers were given information about the program because of their frequent and possibly intense interactions with family members.
6. Every year, pamphlets, monthly flyers, annual schedules, and invitational letters are distributed to:
 - a. All psychology and psychiatry service associates
 - b. Primary care team patient care managers
 - c. Psychiatric nurse specialists
 - d. Chaplain service
 - e. Patient advocates
 - f. Medical and psychiatric social workers
 - g. Suicide prevention coordinator
 - h. Recovery coordinator
 - i. VAMC staff (both outpatient clinics and residential facilities)
 - j. NAMI affiliate
 - k. Oklahoma City Mental Health Consumer Council (state-based organization)
 - l. Oklahoma City VA's Mental Health Consumer Council
7. Monthly flyers and annual schedules are posted in:
 - a. Outpatient mental health clinic waiting room
 - b. Chapel
 - c. Inpatient psychiatry area
 - d. Day Treatment Program
 - e. Primary care area bulletin boards and waiting areas
 - f. Emergency room bulletin board