

2017 BUCKS COUNTY DRUG & ALCOHOL FAMILY SURVEY

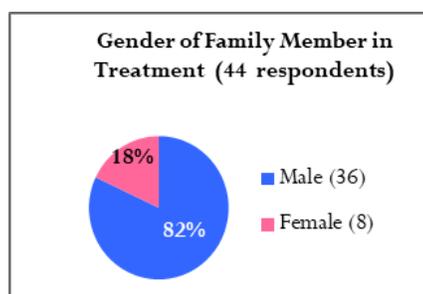
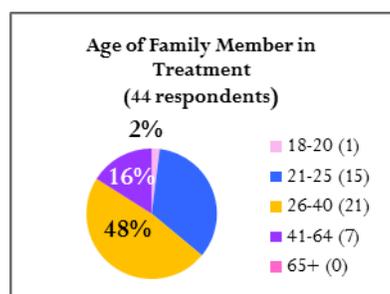
Community Report

In 2016/17, Voice & Vision, Inc. interviewed 44 family members of people who had received treatment for drug and alcohol use. Interviews were conducted by phone. People interviewed were recruited from ongoing support groups as well as by word of mouth. *Note: "Family" is used throughout this report to mean family members AND other sober supports for a person in recovery.*

This project seeks to understand, from the perspective of families, what they need to support the person in treatment and how treatment providers can aid in meeting these needs. Interviews focused on the following objectives: (1) what policies/procedures help families feel welcome and supported, (2) what supports help families address challenges presented when person is in treatment/recovery, (3) what are common barriers impeding engagement of families, (4) what positive contribution does engagement of families offer to treatment and recovery, and (5) how can treatment providers equip families with education and supports to best support the person in recovery.

Recommendations are provided based on family comments and in collaboration with Bucks County Departments of Mental Health and Behavioral Health, the Bucks County Drug & Alcohol Commission, Inc., and Magellan Behavioral Health. A full report is available upon request.

❖ Demographics



RECOMMENDATIONS

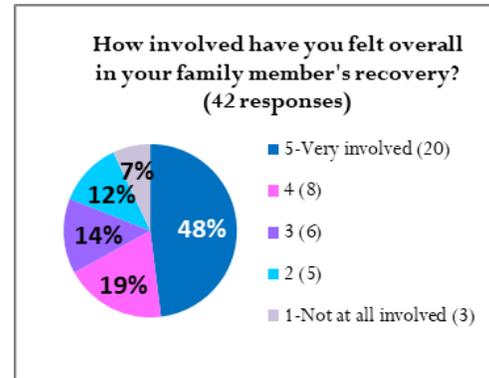
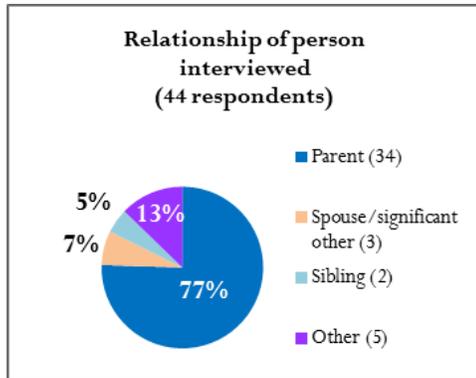
For Providers:

- **Collaborate with families**
 - ◆ Obtain information from families integral to placement, treatment, and discharge planning
 - ◆ Assist families in understanding confidentiality rules and regulations
 - ◆ Provide families with information about resources for the individual as well as family, especially for Recovery Houses and the Recovery House Association
- **Support families emotionally**
 - ◆ Help families understand stigma, recovery process, stages of change, and how changes affect family dynamics
 - ◆ Sponsor support groups at the treatment facility with both an educational AND support focus
 - ◆ Identify and connect families to supports when their family member is awaiting treatment placement
 - ◆ Inform families about community support groups (12-Step groups as well as other community and online groups)
- **Increase opportunities for education, particularly regarding**
 - ◆ Skills for relating to person in recovery (communication, boundaries, etc.)
 - ◆ Disease model of addiction

For the Community

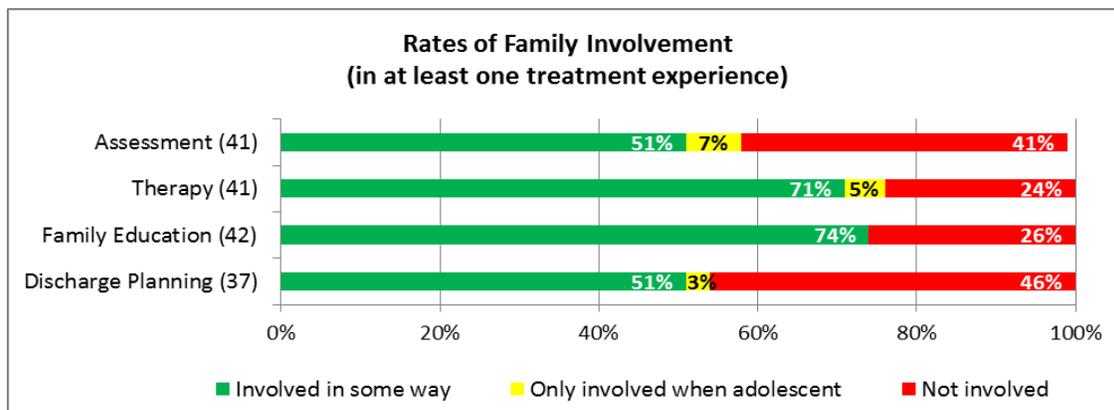
- **Support families impacted by substance use**
 - ◆ Look for ways to support and meet the need of families
 - ◆ Connect families with other families going through similar situations
 - ◆ Collaborate and partner with different systems and community groups
- **Educate community members to reduce stigma**
 - ◆ Incorporate substance use prevention and recovery into regular programming
 - ◆ Utilize persons-in-recovery and family members to educate the community
 - ◆ Sponsor more drug and alcohol community awareness events

❖ Demographics (cont.)



❖ What policies/procedures help families feel welcome and supported?

There are several points during a person’s treatment when providers can involve families. We asked family members about their experience with assessment, therapy, family education, and discharge planning. The chart below indicates families’ assessment of their involvement **at least one time** in these phases. “Family education” sometimes referred only to Orientation sessions.



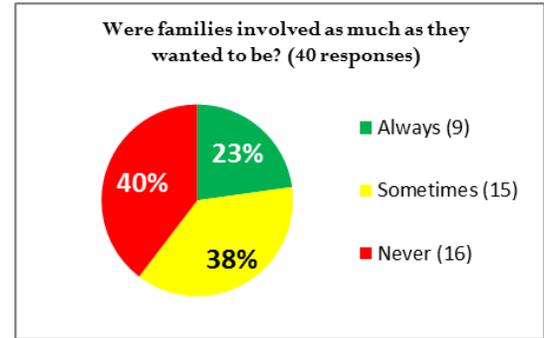
Families shared with us what most helped them during involvement in each of the phases.

- **Assessment:** Being listened to, being able to share history and concerns, and being treated with respect and compassion.
- **Family Therapy:** Talking to the counselor prior to the session, being kept informed, having a structure to the family session, having their family member feel “close” to the counselor, using phone sessions if in-person is difficult.
- **Family Education programs:** Education about addiction impact on brain, learning skills to be supportive without enabling, connecting with other families, having quality speakers/media.
- **Discharge process:** Being kept informed, discussing options with family and considering family input before final recommendations, providing “step-by-step” assistance in connection to aftercare, and assistance in making decisions regarding aftercare.

❖ What are common barriers to engagement of families ?

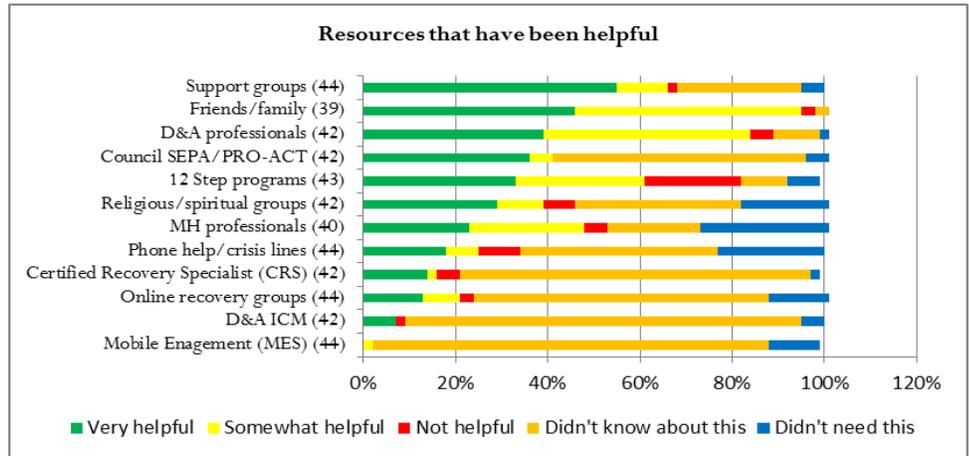
We asked people if anything kept them from being as involved as they wanted to be in their family member’s treatment. (See chart to the right) **Families shared the following difficulties keeping them from being as involved as they wanted:**

- Treatment facility policies/procedures
- Confidentiality laws
- Person in treatment didn’t want involvement
- Distance
- Personal needs/responsibilities
- Staff declining to involve family despite releases

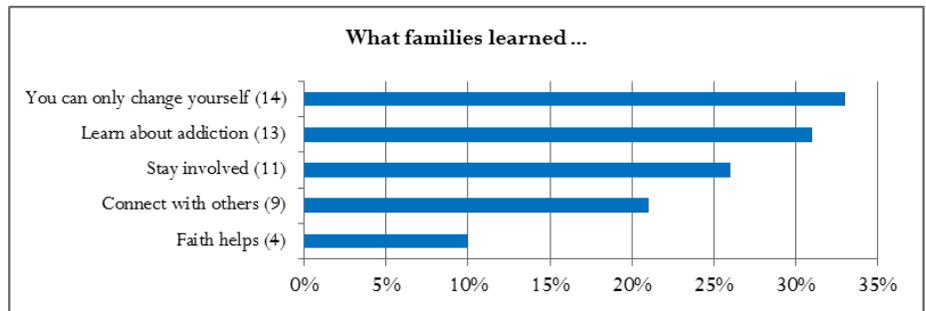


❖ What supports best help families address challenges presented when person is in treatment/recovery?

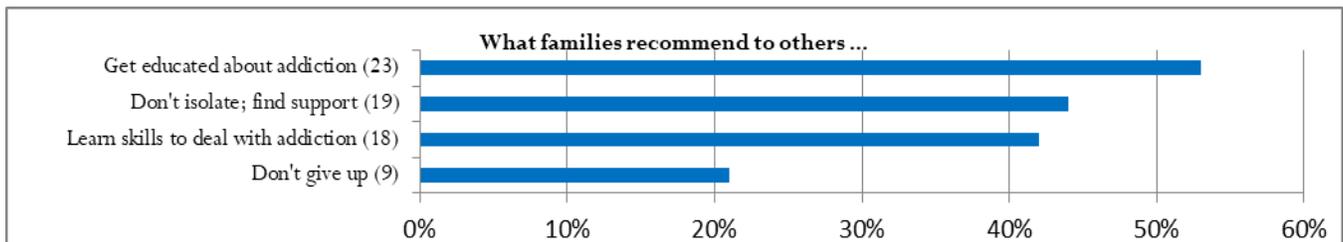
We asked people about the resources that have been helpful to them or to the family member in recovery. The chart on the right reflects their knowledge and use of resources available in Bucks County. Many people told us that they had no knowledge of many of the resources available to them.



Families shared with us **what they have learned in their own journey ...**



and **what advice they would give to other families.**



❖ What positive contribution does engagement of families offer to the D&A treatment and recovery process?

We asked people **how their level of involvement impacted both the person in treatment and themselves and their other family members**. The following list summarizes what families found helpful when they were involved as well as what families thought would have been beneficial if they had been more involved.

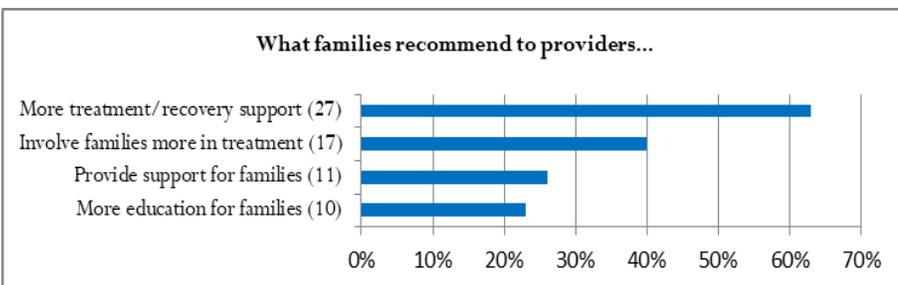
➤ **Impact on person in treatment:**

- ◆ Helps person know people care about them
- ◆ Increases the person in recovery's awareness of how addiction impacts others
- ◆ Provides motivation to stay in treatment/follow aftercare recommendations
- ◆ Minimizes manipulation by person in treatment as therapist and family are on the "same page"
- ◆ Supports therapeutic interventions by providing family insight and knowledge of history
- ◆ Enables family members to become effective advocates/supports to assist with tasks difficult for a person in early recovery

➤ **Impact on family members:**

- ◆ Enables them to separate addiction from the person, leading to greater understanding and empathy
- ◆ Knowledge of resources enables a proactive, rather than reactive response
- ◆ Identification of their own behaviors that negatively impact the person in treatment
- ◆ Learn skills to deal with person in recovery, particularly healthy communication, boundary setting, how NOT to enable
- ◆ More openness to treatment options/recommendations
- ◆ Connection to other people affected by addiction for ongoing support
- ◆ Greater ability to "stay strong" and follow therapeutic recommendations
- ◆ Achieve greater peace of mind

❖ How can D&A providers and other efforts equip families with education and support they need to best support a person in recovery?



We also asked families what **recommendations they would make to providers**. Their recommendations fell into several categories. Many of their suggestions are included in the **Recommendations** section.

Support group observations: In seeking families to participate in our interviews, we visited many provider and community groups — both educational and support focused. We offer the **following commonalities observed at well-attended groups**:

- ◆ Skilled moderators and planned agenda
- ◆ Newcomers welcomed and supported
- ◆ Education materials available
- ◆ Email lists for communication between meetings
- ◆ Attention to BOTH education AND emotional support
- ◆ Upbeat, even joyful, atmosphere

Updated 10/25/2017