



**Lifespan
Physician Group, Inc.**
Psychiatry & Behavioral Health
Delivering health with care.®

Family Therapy Program

The Family Therapy Program is dedicated to assessing and treating families.

The **Family Therapy Program** treats families of any size and constellation. We consider couples to be families, and we work with married couples, cohabitating couples, LGBTQAI couples, elderly couples, families with young or adult children, families facing geriatric issues, stepfamilies, and families facing medical illness or psychiatric illness. Although the whole family is the focus of treatment in family therapy, records will be kept under one family member's name, and we call that person the "patient of record."

The **McMaster Approach** to evaluating and treating families guides all work at the program. The McMaster Approach is a comprehensive approach to evaluating and treating families and was developed by clinicians and clinical researchers. Over the past 40 years, research has supported both its conceptual framework and its effectiveness. The McMaster Approach to family therapy requires that families participate in a comprehensive assessment and then identify goals that will guide treatment. Once in treatment, family members identify concrete actions they can take to work toward their goals. The program uses a team approach and coordinates care with other mental health providers in the Lifespan health system.

What to expect when you come to the program

Assessment

Treatment begins with a comprehensive assessment. All family members age 12 and over complete a set of questionnaires, and then meet with at least one member of the family therapy team. All family members will have a chance to lay out any issues or concerns they see themselves facing as a family, with the understanding that the purpose of the meeting is simply to get a lay of the land, not to solve problems or manage crises. After that, the clinician will ask questions designed to help him or her get to know the family. We want to learn what a typical day is like, how tasks in the family are divided up, how the family handles challenges all families encounter, areas where things are running smoothly, and areas that feel more difficult.

The therapist will then present his or her understanding of the family, gleaned both from questionnaire data and from the initial interview. Family members will have an opportunity to add anything the therapist missed, or correct anything they feel the therapist got wrong. Once the family and the therapist have come to a shared understanding of how the family operates and what the family is facing, the therapist will outline options for how to proceed, which may or may not include family therapy. The therapist and the family then discuss how they want to proceed with the proposed options.

Contracting for Treatment

When families agree to enter treatment, they identify specific issues they want to address, and specific steps they plan to take to address them. In addition, they discuss with the therapist a reasonable timeframe for treatment, as well as expectations for attendance and tasks to be completed between sessions.

Treatment

Treatment consists of discussing progress toward previously agreed upon goals. Sessions may focus on successes or struggles in addressing an agreed upon problem list. Families practice new ways of communicating, handling emotions, and problem solving in sessions. They also identify tasks to be completed between sessions in order to address mutually agreed upon goals.

Termination

Ideally, treatment ends when both the family and the therapist agree that adequate progress has been made in the mutually agreed upon goals that were established at the beginning of treatment. Treatment may also end if the family no longer wants to participate, or if they are unable to follow through on mutually agreed upon tasks.

Contact Us

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Lifespan now uses LifeChart, an electronic health record system that gives you access to your own medical information and enables private communication with your physicians. Visit Lifespan.org/MyLifespan.