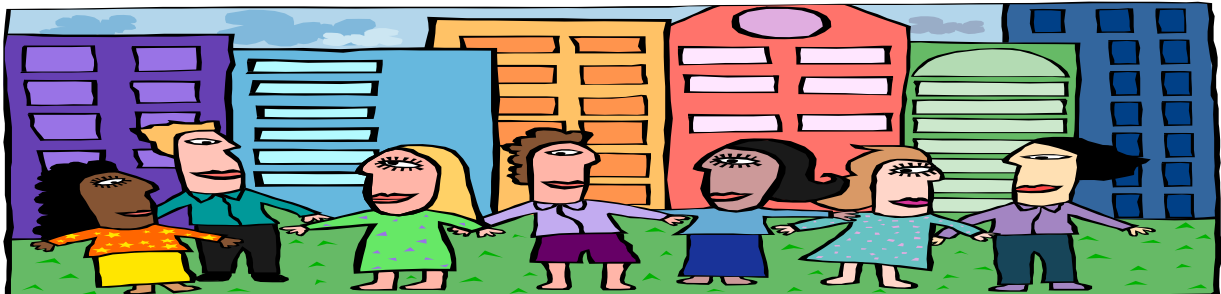
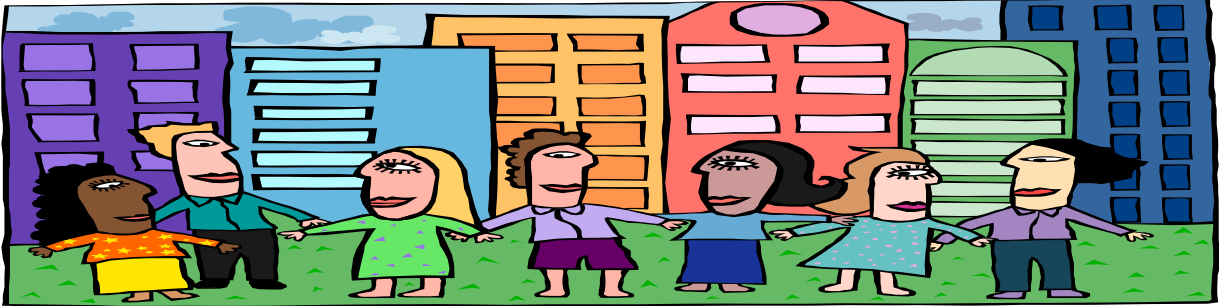


ATLANTIC CAPE
FAMILY SUPPORT ORGANIZATION

HOSPITAL COMPANIONSHIP HANDBOOK





ATLANTIC CAPE FAMILY SUPPORT ORGANIZATION

"BUILDING ON THE STRENGTHS OF THE FAMILY"

Our Organization is unique because we are
PARENTS SUPPORTING PARENTS

Our staff are parents and caregivers of children with
emotional and behavioral challenges.

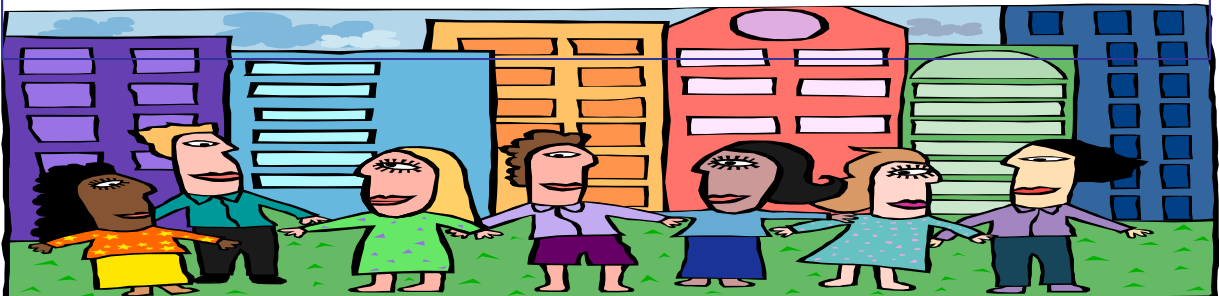
The most important support that a parent can receive is
the support of another parent who knows the struggles and fears
of raising a child with emotional and behavioral challenges.

We believe in a preventive approach which is more responsive and flexible
to the family's needs, creating a more relaxed home environment for
the parent and the child.

We also believe in investing in the strengths of the family and the child.

We believe that the most important voice to be heard for the child
is the parent's voice.

Our primary goal is to enable the parent or caregiver to advocate for their child and
to have their voice heard in decisions concerning their child.





RESPONSIBILITIES OF FAMILY SUPPORT ORGANIZATIONS

We understand that the family must be recognized as the primary resource and decision makers for their family.

We discuss the family's journey together.

We meet families where they are in their journey.

We support, educate and help families advocate for themselves.

We assess with families their strength and needs.

We coach families.

We provide information and referrals.

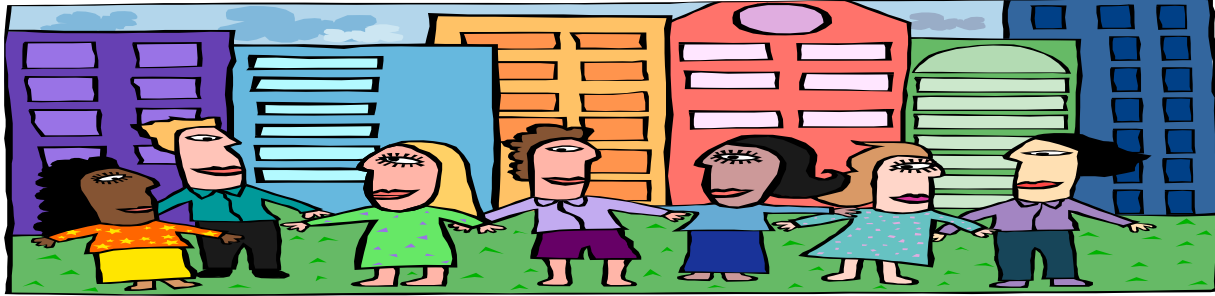
We provide education that will support families in becoming active and informed decision makers on behalf of themselves and their children.

We advocate with, and on behalf of, families and their children.

We provide flexible support services and meet unplanned needs quickly and responsively.

We provide supports as determined by the family.





HOSPITAL COMPANIONSHIP PROGRAM (Cape May County)

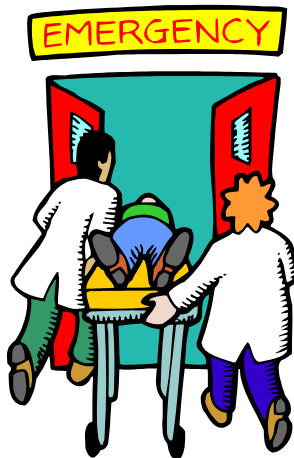
The Atlantic Cape Family Support Organization provides the staffing for the Hospital Companionship Program at the Cape Regional Medical Center in Cape May Court House in Cape May County.

The Hospital Companionship Program is made up of parents and caregivers of children with emotional and behavioral challenges that support parents and caregivers that have brought their child to the emergency room for screening because of a crisis. The hospital companions are present seven days a week in the emergency room for alternating times periods.

This can be a very difficult, scary and emotional time for a parent. The companions are able to help the family through the screening process and give them helpful information because they have been through the screening process themselves with their child. We also assist with other children that may have had to come with the parent and child in crisis. We provide snacks and games to occupy the other children.

We have found that parents are so thankful to have someone there that has been through what they are going through and can relate to their frustrations. This means more to the families than anything else. They finally know that they are not alone.

We are proud to be able to offer this special support to families in Cape May County.



SCREENING

My child is in crisis!

What can I expect during
The screening process?

WHAT IS SCREENING?

SCREENING is a process that occurs in the Emergency Room of the hospital when your child is in crisis due to mental illness. A screening is an evaluation by mental health and medical professionals. The screening team will determine if mental illness is the cause of the crisis and whether the child is a danger to oneself, others or property.

HOW MUCH TIME DOES SCREENING TAKE?

Screening can take a long time. The screening team is very sensitive to the stresses that a family experiences during the screening process. Screening can take a long time because of all the evaluations, tests and assessments that may have to be done. Be prepared to be at the hospital for a number of hours.

MEDICAL CLEARANCE

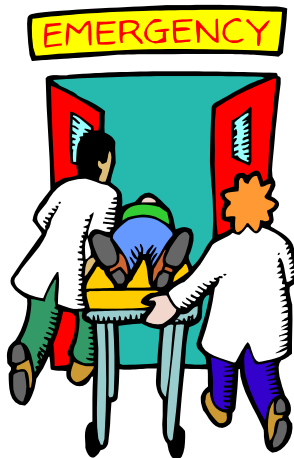
One of the things that the team must do is to determine that the crisis is due to mental illness and is not a side effect of drugs or a medical condition.

INSURANCE PRE-AUTHORIZATION

The screening center must be authorized by your insurance company for referral for treatment or hospitalizations. Your medical insurance company may also indicate where your child may be referred. Unfortunately, waiting for these pre-authorizations can take a long time.

YOUR PRESENCE

It is important that you or a guardian remain with the child during the screening process. You are an important source of information and your consent may be needed at various times during the process.



SCREENING

My child is in crisis!

What can I expect during
The screening process?

continued ...

WHAT ARE MY RIGHTS AS A PARENT?

When you enter the screening center, you should be given a copy of the Patient's Bill of Rights. If not, ask for your copy because it outlines your child's basic rights. The following are guidelines regarding parental consent for voluntary hospital admission: as a parent, you have the right to consent for your child, 17 years and younger, to be admitted to the hospital without the child's consent. If your child is 14 years or older, your child has the right to admit him or herself for mental health treatment, even if it is against your will. However, the parent must always provide the consent for the medical treatment that is part of the hospital admission.

WHAT CAN I EXPECT AS A RESULT OF SCREENING?

Your child may be referred to a treatment program in your community, such as outpatient therapy, a day treatment program, private or county based mental health treatment program, or any program that will allow your child to get the help that they need at home.

Your child may be voluntarily or involuntarily hospitalized, which may be in the child's best interest, in order to receive the necessary intensive care.

Your child may be referred to community services that are not mental health based.

IN PARTNERSHIP FOR YOUR CHILD

It is the sincere hope of the screening team that your visit to the screening center is a very helpful and worthwhile experience for your child and you.

The screening team will strive to make accurate assessments of your child so that clinically appropriate decisions can be made for your child's best care.

Mutual respect and honest communication are essential components in order for an effective partnership between the screening team, your child and you.



Things you can do or have with you to make the screening process easier for you and your child

Have a crisis plan in effect before the crisis occurs. Enlist family and friends that have the ability to calm your child. Have their telephone numbers handy. Have pre-arranged plans and telephone numbers of people that you can call in a crisis to baby sit your other children.

When you arrive at the hospital, ask if there is a Hospital Companionship Program or Volunteer Program for parents going through the screening process.

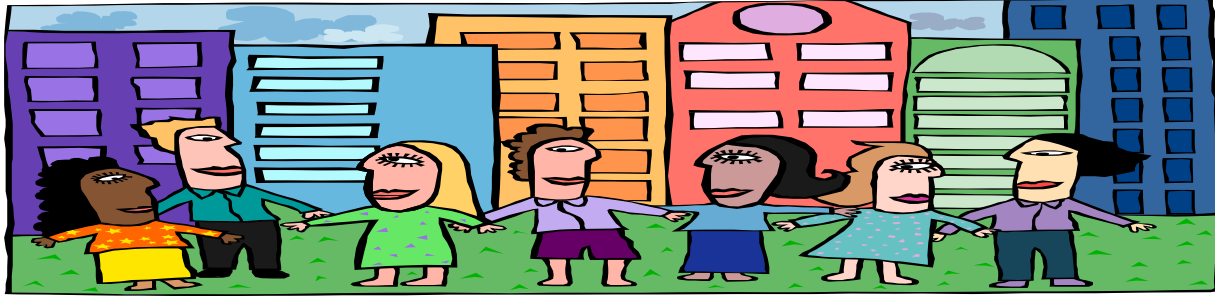
Keep a current copy of your child's medical insurance card with you at all times.

Keep a current copy of all of your child's medications and dosage instructions in a handy location at all times.

Keep a current copy of all of your child's doctors, therapists, etc. and their telephone numbers in a handy location at all times.

If you have been through the screening process in the past, or think your child may have the potential for a crisis, keep a zip lock bag with all of the information above in a handy location.

If you have other children that may have to go with you, keep a bag with some basic items such as books, small games or any items that you know will keep your child(ren) occupied during the process. You may want to include some snacks and loose change for vending machines.



**HOW CAN I GET IN TOUCH WITH THE ACFSO?
WHERE CAN I GET MORE INFORMATION
ABOUT HOW I CAN HELP MY FAMILY?**

YOU CAN CALL OUR COMMUNITY OUTREACH SPECIALIST
AT OUR NORTHFIELD OFFICE
609-485-0575

**HOW CAN I MEET OTHER PARENTS
JUST LIKE ME FOR SUPPORT?**

WE HAVE A SUPPORT GROUP THAT MEETS
THE 2nd THURSDAY OF EVERY MONTH
AT
COURT HOUSE CHURCH OF CHRIST
102 EAST PACIFIC AVENUE
CAPE MAY COURT HOUSE

6:30 TO 8:30 PM

LIGHT REFRESHMENTS PROVIDED

BABYSITTING IS PROVIDED

CALL 609-485-0575 EXT 102 FOR MORE INFORMATION