

# Intensive Family Support Services (IFSS) Referral Handout

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## Why This Matters

Families are the primary support system for most adults living with serious mental illness. Families also include natural supports such as friends, partners, roommates, or any person who has a significant relationship and provides emotional and/or physical support to a person living with a mental illness.

Caregivers often provide daily support, crisis intervention, and care coordination without training. Supporting families improves outcomes, reduces relapse, and strengthens treatment.

## What Families Experience

- Sudden transition into caregiving during first episode
- High emotional stress: fear, grief, and uncertainty
- Navigating complex systems with little guidance
- Financial and time burden (often 25+ hours/week)

## What IFSS Provides

- Education about mental illness and recovery
- Practical skills for communication and crisis response
- Peer support from other families
- Advocacy and system navigation assistance
- Emotional support to reduce caregiver stress

## Why Refer to IFSS

- Improves client stability and reduces relapse
- Strengthens family ability to support recovery
- Reduces crisis events and hospitalizations
- Provides support clinicians cannot offer alone

## Who Should Be Referred

Refer ALL families of adults living with mental illness, especially:

- First episode of psychosis or mental illness
- Frequent hospitalizations or crises
- Caregiver stress or burnout
- Communication or engagement challenges

## **How to Refer**

Make referral part of your standard practice:

“We recommend IFSS to all families—it helps you understand and manage what you’re going through.”

## **Contact Information (NJ)**

Intensive Family Support Services (IFSS)

NJ Division of Mental Health & Addiction Services

Phone: 1-866-202-HELP (4357)

Services are free, confidential, and available statewide.

For county-by-county guide: <https://naminj.org/resources/intensive-family-support-services-ifss/>