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Transcript

Bill Pollock

This is Show Me Today, the Voice of Missouri, and we're joined by JJ Gossrau. She's the director of Missouri's Early Psychosis Care Center and Young Adult Services at Missouri's Department of Mental Health. And she's here to tell us about the new Life Launch Youth and Family Engagement Guide. And we'll find out why engagement is so important and what it takes to do this well. JJ, thank you for joining us.

JJ Gossrau

Hi, Bill. Thank you for having me.

Bill Pollock

When people hear youth and family engagements, they may not know exactly what that means or they might just think advisory boards or surveys. What does meaningful engagement look like in practice?

JJ Gossrau

It takes time to build meaningful relationships with families and youth. And it's also important to pause and educate families and young people about why their experience and their voice matter. So invite them to share their story to help inform personnel to better engage their family. And then really listen, really listen when they're telling their story. And as in your organization, find ways to reimburse families and youth for the time they've dedicated to help you understand their experience. For example, sometimes there's youth or family advisory councils that you can invite them to be a part of or focus groups. And when that happens, we need to really find a way to reimburse them and support them for their time. So even if your organization can't due to constraints or parameters, commit to collaborating or partnering with an organization or entity that can. Missouri is fortunate to have several family organizations dedicated to supporting families. And if you're a program director, allow those you support to carve out time to build meaningful relationships and make sure they have the training, the tools, and the resources that they need to do that. It's important to recognize that this is not just a check the box situation. This is an ongoing

process that takes time and effort to support youth and families in the ways that they share are helpful and to put that into practice when they do share it.

Bill Pollock

How do you engage youth and families who don't trust the system or have been harmed by it?

JJ Gossrau

Well, first, recognizing that is a possibility and maybe in some situations a strong possibility and acknowledging this. And second, expressing an understanding and having patience because young people and families do face difficulties navigating services and have many experiences, probably both good and bad, that they hold onto. And then I would say finally, let them know you'd like this experience to be different and asking how you might be able to help. Really listening and taking that time to understand their experience and then always following through. Even if you can't achieve what you had hoped, make sure you keep them informed. And then I guess finally, families and young people are our partners in this work, and we need to do what we can to help support that relationship.

Bill Pollock

What does good engagement look like across different developmental stages from children, early teens, young adults?

JJ Gossrau

Stages, it's important to know who young people look to, feel supported by, and those are the people you invite to be a part of the process when supporting young people. Younger children might have more intense family support, while older youth may have less family, but more natural supports.

Bill Pollock

Yeah, what are those natural supports? Explain that.

JJ Gossrau

Natural supports are those people that the young people have made a part of their circle. They're cheerleaders, so to speak. But it's also important to know what's relevant to young people, their interests, their friends, what they enjoy. I mean, taking a genuine interest is so important and finding ways to create an environment that they can be comfortable in. That environment is going to look different for young children than it will for teens and likewise for older youth or young adults.

Bill Pollock

That's JJ Gossrau, director of Missouri's Early Psychosis Care Center and Young Adult Services at Missouri's Department of Mental Health. And we're learning more about the new Life Launch Youth and Family Engagement Guide. And as you've been working on this, JJ, what gap were you trying to fill?

JJ Gossrau

The idea behind the guide is to develop a resource to help child serving personnel and family organizations move from just checking the box to really understanding what engagement is and why it's so important to provide the tools that they need to begin moving the needle towards more meaningful and authentic engagement.

Bill Pollock

What would someone find inside the Life Launch Youth and Family Engagement Guide? Can you walk us through that?

JJ Gossrau

Sure. So inside the Life Launch Engagement Guide, you'll find checklists and templates that can support organizations in assessing engagement readiness, building advisory councils, and also measuring engagement. And specifically, so for direct service providers, they'll find practical guidance to begin engagement right away. For example, there are field guides that translate concepts such as engagement and building trust into really clear, observable practices.

Bill Pollock

How does meaningful engagement connect to outcomes for youth and families?

JJ Gossrau

Meaningful engagement is so important. We see better retention in services, improved clinical progress, and often better system efficiency. For example, more appointments are kept and people working with families have a better understanding of the obstacles they face.

Bill Pollock

If there's one mindset shift you want listeners to walk away with, what is it?

JJ Gossrau

Understand that there is an evidence There is evidence that meaningful engagement matters and that this is something that takes time. It's not one of those things that we either have or we don't have. We build it over time. And the youth engagement guide provides tools and resources to help us do that.

Bill Pollock

JJ, where can people access the Life Launch Youth and Family Engagement Guide and start putting this into practice?

JJ Gossrau

People can access the guide online at lifelunchmo.org. It's at the For Professionals page. And yeah, should be pretty easy to find.

Bill Pollock

JJ Gossrau Director of Early Psychosis Care Center and Director of Young Adult Services for the Missouri Department of Mental Health. sharing some great information on the Life Launch Youth and Family Engagement Guide. Thank you, JJ.

JJ Gossrau

Thanks, Bill. It was great to be here. Appreciate it.

Bill Pollock

This is Show Me Today, the voice of Missouri.