



## **Questions and answers for family members about sharing confidential information.**

### ***What is EASA?***

The Early Assessment and Support Alliance is a state-wide network of programs providing early intervention for teenagers and young adults who are experiencing early symptoms of psychosis. EASA programs are provided by local community mental health centers and follow a common set of practice guidelines.

### ***What does EASA offer my family?***

EASA offers individualized assessment, treatment and support for both the individual and family. The focus is on both understanding and treating the person's situation and on providing the education and support your family needs so that your loved one can recover and continue to progress into adulthood successfully.

### ***What and how should I communicate to my EASA provider?***

You are an important partner. Your observations about your loved one's and family's strengths, observations of changes you have observed, medical and developmental history, are all important. We will work with you to help you understand what may have changed, what may be helpful in supporting your loved one, and to make a plan together to move forward.

Assuming your loved one is willing, you may meet separately with EASA team members or join your loved one for all or a portion of appointments. Do not hesitate to request these meetings.

### ***When might the team not be able to talk to me?***

Under Oregon Law communication with family members requires a written release of information (permission for EASA to talk with you regarding your loved one's treatment with EASA) for individuals over the age of 18. There are a few exceptions to this law, which your EASA team can explain. Sometimes the individual does not want to sign a release or is only willing to sign a release to allow communication about a very limited range of information. Regardless of having a signed release or not the family can still provide information to the clinical team and receive information from the team which is not specific to your family member, such as how the program works and education about psychosis and ways families can help. Team members can also communicate with you if there is an emergency which might result in a life-threatening situation.

It is important for the clinical team to build trust with the young person in order to engage them in treatment. Sometimes that means that the young person does not want to share all



information with their family. When this occurs the clinical team will honor that choice as it essential to build a trusting relationship. The clinical team will generally work with the young people to encourage family inclusion and communication when helpful in reaching treatment goals.

***How do we get a good diagnosis?***

Most people who come to EASA are experiencing changes which may be difficult to diagnose in the short-term. EASA may work with your other medical providers to complete a thorough medical evaluation. The brain is going through significant changes during teenage and young adult years, and symptoms can be caused by a variety of conditions and vulnerabilities. The team will work with you to get to the best diagnosis possible and to provide the most appropriate treatment.

***What if my loved one does not want care?***

It is sometimes difficult for young people to recognize or accept the need for mental health or other medical treatment. If the person is at risk or harm to self or others, sometimes involuntary treatment is required. Normally, however, it is better for the clinical team to build trust and support the person to make choices related to their own care. This way, they are more likely to understand why they are participating in care and continue choosing treatment in the future. The EASA team will engage the young person, along with parents or guardians where appropriate in shared decision making. This means that the young person and family members receive information and options about care, have the chance to explore those options, their concerns and preferences, and make a plan together.

If your loved one refuses to be part of EASA, the EASA team can continue to problem solve with you and provide you with resources.

***What is harm reduction?***

It is common for teenagers and young adults to make decisions their parents or guardians do not support such as using alcohol or marijuana or engaging in risky sexual behavior. Some risky behaviors are a normal part of the developmental process. Parents and guardians can set their own rules about behavior in their household. In the treatment process, however, it is important for the young person to be able to freely disclose behavior they might not be telling their parents about in order to be able to recognize the impacts of those decisions. EASA uses a “harm reduction” approach, meaning that we do not require young people to stop harmful behaviors such as substance use in order to participate in the program, but we do actively work with young people to see how these behaviors may be interfering with their goals and to encourage them to reduce those behaviors to prevent serious harmful consequences.

***How do we learn about other resources?***



EASA maintains a website, [www.easacommunity.org](http://www.easacommunity.org), which has a wide range of educational materials and resources for families.

Also please review the attached document Minor Rights: Access and Consent to Health Care for more information regarding the laws and rules regarding minors and health care.