



## Family Council Canadian Mental Health Association Waterloo Wellington

### TERMS OF REFERENCE

#### PURPOSE

The Family Council will enhance family engagement and improve the quality of care at CMHA WW by:

- Providing input on/recommendations for improving or enhancing CMHA programs, initiatives, policies, processes, etc.
- Representing family perspectives about loved ones' experiences at CMHA WW, and their own experiences.
- Supporting CMHA WW to enhance its family engagement and family-centred care practices.
- Strengthening communication and collaboration between CMHA WW clients, families and staff.

#### WHAT DO WE MEAN BY “FAMILY”?

“Family” refers to a circle of care and support that offers an enduring commitment to care for one another, related either biologically, emotionally or legally. It includes those who the person identifies as significant to their well-being.”<sup>1</sup>

#### MEMBERSHIP

The Family Council will consist of no more than 15 members, including 12 Council Members, a CMHA WW leadership representative, and 1-2 CMHA WW staff. The Family Council will be co-chaired by one Council Member and one Leader/Staff (with the option to change to two Council Member co-chairs over time). Council Members will:

- Live within Waterloo Wellington.
- Be a family member<sup>2</sup> and/or caregiver of an individual accessing CMHA WW services.
- Represent the diversity of Waterloo Wellington (e.g. ethno-cultural, socio-economic, urban/rural, etc.). In the event that membership is unbalanced in terms of diversity, applicants may be declined or deferred accordingly.

#### RESPONSIBILITIES

##### Council Members

- Be willing to serve a one year term.
- Will have a maximum term of three years. Members are welcome to re-apply if they wish to continue.
- Attend meetings regularly in order to be informed and able to provide effective input.

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<sup>1</sup> Dostaler and Cannon, Parents for Children's Mental Health, 2011.

<sup>2</sup> “Family” = any person a client identifies as part of their support team. Includes biological family members, families of choice, foster parents, partners, siblings, friends, etc.

- Participate in an orientation session(s) and observe a meeting before joining the Council.
- Be prepared to be an active and informed participant in meetings.
- Engage thoughtfully and constructively around the issues and ideas discussed.
- Provide transparent information to the community regarding Council activities.
- Participate in evaluation of the Council's activities.
- Sign a non-disclosure agreement and maintain the confidentiality of other group members.

### **Staff**

- 1 CMHA leadership team member - respond to questions; receive and act on input and recommendations.
- 1-2 staff - support Council Members; coordinate logistics (e.g. meeting spaces, speakers, refreshments, parking, processing honorariums and mileage, etc.); record and circulate meeting notes; provide members with information about CMHA WW's programs and services.

### **Co-Chairs**

- Must be able to attend meetings regularly.
- Keep up to date on meeting minutes, agendas, and action items from meetings.
- Provide input on administrative tasks such as agendas, communications, as well facilitation of the meeting.
- Work on behalf on the Family Council members to ensure accurate and equal representation and encourage positive, collaborative communication.
- Adhere to the philosophy, purpose and duties as identified in the Family Council. If the assigned Co-Chair is not a good fit or able to meet requirements of the role, a conversation will be had to identify concerns and necessary steps to correct.

### **Family Engagement Specialist (*in year one; transfer to Council members in year two*)**

- Ensure council members are welcomed and supported to participate.
- Provide orientation and mentorship for new members.
- Contact a member who has been absent from 2-3 consecutive meetings.
- "Check in" with Council Members regularly regarding their Council experiences.
- Gather feedback from Council members when exiting the committee, or as needed.

### **TERMS OF MEMBERSHIP**

- There will be no set membership period, recognizing the nature of caring for individuals whose health and needs may fluctuate. However, members will be supported to participate for at least one year where possible, in order to build an informed and high-impact membership.
- Upon missing 3 consecutive meetings, members will meet with the designated CMHAWW staff member to discuss options related to taking a "leave of absence" and will also participate in a re-engagement support meeting to prepare for return to Council duties.
- Regular recruitment will take place to ensure positions remain filled and to provide new perspectives.

- The first Council Member co-chair will be selected by staff, with subsequent co-chairs selected by the membership.

## **MEETINGS**

- Six meetings will be scheduled per year, with the option to book additional meetings as needed.
- Meetings will be held during the evening.
- Guests may be invited to attend meetings as needed.
- Locations and timing of meetings will be scheduled with accessibility in mind (e.g., rotating locations; offering web conferencing at multiple locations; physically accessible spaces; communications that consider language and literacy levels; etc.).

## **REPORTING**

The Family Council is accountable to Fred Wagner (Executive Director of CMHAWW) and the Board of Directors of CMHAWW.