

Foundation for Professionals in Services to Adolescents

Foundation Year in Family Therapy: Family Therapy Training Network Scotland

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Foundation for Professionals in Services to Adolescents for their support in providing funding towards my first year training in Family Therapy completed with the Family Therapy Training Network Scotland. Without the support I would not have been able to complete this valuable training.

Course Composition:

The premise of the foundation course is to provide a concrete grounding in systemic theory as the first year in a 4 year master program. In addition to being a standalone qualification introducing professionals actively working with families' to therapeutic systemic tools and concepts that can be integrated into their current practice. The training consisted of 6, 2 day blocks, with 8 assignments and 2 essays forming the assessment component of the course.

Clinical Impact:

Working as part of a tier 4 Child and Adolescent inpatient team in the role of psychotherapist, much of my practice involves working with adolescents who are experiencing serious complex mental health presentations including; eating disorders, psychosis, depression, anxiety, obsessive compulsive disorder, post traumatic stress disorder and attachment disorders. A significant percentage of whom present with long standing difficulties which have resulted in multiple inpatient admissions, compounding the impact of an adolescent's illness on the family system.

The skills and knowledge gained from this training have enabled me to review clinical work and apply a systemic lens to case conceptualisation and treatment planning. The result of which has been; engaging families in work in new and creative ways, supporting my multi-disciplinary team to integrate systemic thinking in to case formulations, providing training to my multi-disciplinary team and enabling trainee psychologists to shadow my clinical work where systemic practises have been used.

Throughout the course I explored the evolution of family therapy over time and the subsequent models of family therapy that have developed including; strategic, structural, solution focused, narrative, and Milan. Reflecting on how models were similar and different to my previous training and how aspects of these models could be of benefits to the families I work with. A component of the foundation year training is the exploration of the Social GRRACCESS (Burnam, 1993) reflecting on the impact and importance of gender, race, religion, ability, age, class, culture, ethnicity, sexuality and spirituality on a family system. The importance of exploring the context in which illness has arisen and being able to explore cultural norms with families has enriched my working practises and enabled me to build stronger therapeutic relationships with families who often report previous experiences of feeling blamed or judged by professionals in the light of their child becoming unwell.

Personal Professional Development:

Completion of this course has had a tremendous impact on my practice. The areas covered within the course have expanded my ability to reflect on the wider systemic issues that are significant to my patients. With each family presenting with different challenges expanding my therapeutic repertoire enables me to consider which therapeutic model may best fit the family rather than fitting a family to a model. Seeing the positive impact this training as had on both myself, my patients and my team I hope to continue towards completion of a masters in family therapy in the years ahead.