

What is PIER multifamily group (MFG)?

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Multifamily Group is an opportunity for your family (client with parents, siblings, partners, and/or other social supports) to meet with clinical staff and 5-6 other PIER families to learn more about the troubling symptoms that brought you into the PIER Program. Studies show that MFG can help your family member get better as everyone learns more about the illness process, ways to reduce stress, and how to get on with your lives (friends, work, school, activities).

How often do we meet?

Families meet every two weeks in the same location, on the same day of the week, and at the same time for 90 minutes. The time of the meeting is determined by the schedules of all participants - in general, the meetings are held in the early evenings, after school and work. You will learn more specifics about the group from your PIER clinician if you are enrolled in the treatment condition of the program.

What do we do in MFG?

Although MFG has a structured format led by 2 clinicians, families are encouraged to participate fully in the process. People learn to deal with problems in a practical, step-by-step manner. Past participants have shared that MFG helps everyone learn about confusing symptoms and behaviors that are a result of brain changes. Families learn that other people have similar needs and experiences, and that together, they can find ways to deal with stress and conflicts, which tend to be the cause of symptom flare-ups. Communication within families tends to improve as well, e.g., less criticism, more understanding, better ways of dealing with conflict.

How does MFG help?

Studies show that MFG is more effective than working on issues in individual therapy. Adolescence and young adulthood, by its very nature, is a stressful time. In FPE, you and your family will learn to deal with common problems that often create conflicts, such as:

- Isolation
- Confusion and poor concentration
- Missing school for extended periods or not being able to get up in the mornings to get there on time
- Poor academic performance
- Difficulty finding and/or keeping a job
- Taking medication
- Spending time with peers who take drugs or “don’t care”
- Feeling like a social misfit

Why should my family attend MFG if my loved one is feeling better?

We expect that your loved one WILL improve and return to a former level of functioning, which is to be celebrated. However, we know that a teen or young adult’s life is often hectic. We also know that if someone has a biological vulnerability to stress, everyday upsets can lead to symptom flare-ups. Therefore, it’s important to have a place to go to where those stressors can be dealt with in a matter-of-fact, non-blaming manner, where everyone learns.