# Sample Summary Document on the Caregiver Guidelines

Summary Documents, sometimes called briefing notes, are short papers that quickly and effectively inform decision-makers about an issue. In this case, it could be about a particular recommendation from the Guidelines. A well-prepared summary document educates a person about an issue in a clear, concise, and easy to read manner. There are many variations on summary documents, but they all have three main points.

* **the purpose** (usually stated as the issue, topic or purpose)
* **a summary of the facts and/or analysis** (what this section contains and the headings used will be determined by the purpose of the summary document)
* **the conclusion** (this may be a conclusion, a recommendation or other advice, or both)

Some tips for writing a good summary document:

* Short: One to two pages - as short as possible.
* Concise: Every word is used as efficiently as possible.
* Clear: Keep it simple and to the point.
* Reliable: The information in a summary document must be accurate, sound, and dependable; any missing information or questions about the information should be pointed out.
* Readable: Use plain language and clear layout.

### Sample summary document for decisions makers

# Implementation of Family Caregiver Guidelines in Administrations

Date: XXX

## Issue

What steps can provincial/territorial senior mental health managers take to facilitate uptake of relevant recommendations contained in the *National Guidelines for a Comprehensive Service System to Support Family Caregivers of Adults with Mental Health Problems and Illnesses* (Guidelines)?

## Purpose

Guide the first briefing meeting between a provincial/territorial manager and two representatives from XXX family caregivers’ coalition. (With minor editing this could also serve as a leave behind for the manager.)

## Background

The Guidelines were issued in 2013 by the Mental Health Commission of Canada (MHCC).

*Changing, Directions, Changing Lives: The Mental Health Strategy for Canada* made a number of recommendations to improve supports provided to and for the involvement of caregivers in service planning.

The Guidelines were developed under the leadership of the MHCC Family Caregivers Advisory Committee in response to the lack of and inconsistent support experienced by family caregivers of adults living with mental health problems and illnesses.

The background research that was conducted to develop the Guidelines identified that the single highest priority for caregivers is timely and appropriate care for their family members. Family caregivers also need:

* To have their caregiving roles and potential contribution to the recovery of a loved one meaningfully recognized by service providers.
* To receive timely information and support to enhance their coping skills and provide effective recovery-oriented care to their loved ones.
* To receive support to sustain their personal health and emotional wellbeing.

The Guidelines provide:

* An overview of what caregivers need and the benefits of supporting family caregivers.
* Principles and values to guide changes to be made by service systems and individual service providers.
* A few key contextual factors such as stigma, diversity of families, and geography.
* A series of specific recommendations to improve or strengthen:
* information sharing with family caregivers;
* competencies and tools for providing care to diverse ethno-cultural communities, in rural and remote areas, and across the spectrum of family relationships;
* the recognition of the role of families and their organizations as well as access to programs and supports;
* protocols and training for clinicians around engaging families and meeting their needs across the stages of a loved one’s illness;
* interactions with the legal system;
* availability of personal caregiving supports including respite, financial, and workplace accommodation; and
* a culture of involving and supporting family caregivers in service planning and delivery at all levels and building capacity to meet caregiver needs and involvement.

The implementation of the guidelines depend on a range of policy and practice changes across the continuum of mental health services as well as some social policy changes outside of the mental health system.

## Current Status

Since the release of the guidelines, MHCC has participated in a national coalition of caregivers led by cancer organizations, to recommend improved financial support for caregivers through tax and related policies at the federal government level.

MHCC has also provided a tool kit to support family advocacy organizations in making their case for implementation of recommendations and maintains a collaborative space where family caregivers can share experiences and information about their efforts.

MHCC continues to look for opportunities to promote the guidelines.

Family advocacy organizations are using the guidelines to advocate for changes at various levels. (Add any other evidence of actions taken to date or your specific actions.)

## Key Considerations

Provincial and territorial mental health administrations can influence the uptake of the guidelines. Recommendations in section nine of the Guidelines are especially relevant.

Examples of actions:

* Sharing information about the Guidelines with regional health authorities and other agencies funded by the ministry and suggesting they host a presentation on improving uptake of the Guidelines.
* Reviewing funding policies that enable family caregiver organizations to participate in planning and developing mental health practice standards and programs.
* Create and support regular meetings of provincial/territorial family advisory committees.

## Recommendations

That XX administration identify ways it can facilitate update of the recommendations.

That a follow-up meeting be held to further explore options and next steps.