

Preparing for a Family Treatment Session

A family session can involve different hopes and concerns. Ask what the session is for, who is taking part, and how the clinician wants each person to prepare.

Keep completed notes private. Use short notes in each box; continue on another copy or separate paper when needed. Save the completed PDF on your device and reopen it to check your notes before closing.

SAMHSA's quality-treatment guidance describes family involvement as something that can be included when desired by the person receiving care. Family-support guidance also points to therapy and counseling for the family. This worksheet does not decide who may participate or what information a clinician may disclose. [1] [2]

Questions for the clinician before the session

Topic	Ask before assuming
Purpose	Is this treatment planning, family therapy, education or another kind of meeting?
Participants	Who will attend? How are agreement and participation arranged?
Privacy	What is recorded or shared, with whom, and what are the limits of confidentiality?
Speaking and disagreement	How will everyone have a chance to speak? Can someone ask for a pause or a separate conversation?
Access	What communication, interpreter, technology or accessibility arrangements can we make?

Original example: bring an issue, not a verdict

Instead of "Make them understand how wrong they are," an agenda item could be: "We disagree about rides to appointments. I want us to understand the schedule and what help each person can offer." The session can still leave some issues unresolved.

My preparation

My most important issue or question

Describe an example and what you hope to understand or work out.

Privacy or participation questions to ask first

What do I want clarified before sharing? Keep anything especially sensitive on a separate private note if preferred.

Before the meeting ends

- Ask what, if anything, was agreed.
- Name any issue that is still unresolved.
- Confirm who will take each next step and how follow-up will happen.
- Ask whom to contact with questions about the session or plan.

The follow-up we actually agreed

Agreement, person and next step

Write only confirmed arrangements. Keep unanswered issues visible.

Keep this an invitation to discussion

This is an original session organizer, not a contract or a tool for obtaining another person's private information. Ask the clinician how to handle concerns that do not feel safe to raise together.

Sources and Further Reading

[1] SAMHSA: Finding Quality Treatment

<https://www.samhsa.gov/find-support/learn-about-treatment/finding-quality-treatment>

[2] SAMHSA: Helping Families Cope

<https://www.samhsa.gov/mental-health/children-and-families/coping-resources>