

Stages of the Family Life Cycle¹

Stage	Family Features	Changes	Potential additional challenges families of children with serious mental health conditions face
Families with adolescents	Increasing flexibility of family boundaries for child's independence and grandparent frailties	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parent/child relationships shift to permit adolescents' dependence to wax and wane • Refocus on midlife marital and career issues • Shift toward caring for an older generation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stresses of raising a child with a chronic health condition or special needs • Many youth involved with public systems have been in out-of-home care, which typically restricts parental roles during the time away, if not implicitly communicating parental incompetence • Higher family rates of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Single parent household ○ Poverty ○ Mental health conditions ○ Substance use ○ Incarceration • Challenges can impede successful "launch" during transition years
Launching children and moving on	Accepting a multitude of exits from and entries into the family system (i.e., birth of grandchildren, passing of elders)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Renegotiation of marital system as dyad • Children and parents develop adult-to-adult relationships • Inclusion of in-laws and grandchildren • Loss of senior generation 	

¹ Davis, M., Sabella, K., Smith, L. M., & Costa, A. (2011) *Becoming an Adult: Challenges for Those with Mental Health Conditions*. Transitions RTC. Brief 3. Worcester, MA: UMMS, Dept. of Psychiatry, CMHSR, Transitions RTC.