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RESPONSE TO MIAMI SHOOTING: WHAT FAMILIES & FRIENDS CAN DO TO HELP SOMEONE WITH BIPOLAR DISORDER

To arrange a media interview with clinicians and family members dealing with bipolar disorder and get a tip sheet on helping people with bipolar disorder, contact Families for Depression Awareness

WALTHAM, MA– December 9, 2005 – The shooting of Rigoberto Alpizar in Miami on December 7th has left many people wondering what bipolar disorder really is and how they can help someone with bipolar disorder get well.

“It is really important for family members and friends to understand what they can do,” said Julie Totten, President of Families for Depression Awareness. “People with bipolar disorder can get well, especially with other people’s help.”

What is Bipolar Disorder?

Bipolar disorder, also called manic depression, is a chronic mood disorder where a person has periods of depression alternating with mania (elated or irritable moods and increased energy). For symptoms of mania, please visit <http://www.familyaware.org/depression/symptoms.php#manic>.

Bipolar disorder affects about 2 million adults in the U.S. and also occurs in children. People with bipolar disorder may have irrational thoughts and behavior. There is a range of severity to the disorder, from mild to severe. Treatment for bipolar disorder includes medication and is shown to be effective. Research demonstrates that with appropriate treatment, people with bipolar disorder are no more likely to engage in dangerous or violent behavior than others.

What Families and Friends can do

“We get a lot of calls from families wondering what they should do when a family member has bipolar disorder and is not well,” said Totten, “It is a difficult situation. Families first need to call the clinician, report the behaviors that they observe and try to convince the person to see their clinician. They should try to stay calm and talk to the person with bipolar disorder in an empathetic way, so they know you are there for them. They should find out their options for getting the person help, for example, crisis teams can be very helpful. If you have to call the police or take them to the emergency room, you need to go with them and be the liaison. The important point is to be a partner in their care.”

About Families for Depression Awareness

Families for Depression Awareness is a national nonprofit organization helping families recognize and cope with depressive disorders. The organization provides education, outreach, and advocacy to support families and is comprised of families who have lost a family member to suicide or have watched a loved one suffer with depression, with little knowledge about how to help. For more information please go to www.familyaware.org.