Psychiatric disorders are common - 1 in 4 American adults will experience some kind of mental illness in a given year. Psychiatric disorders are complex, etiologically heterogeneous conditions, arising as a result of the combined effects of genetic and environmental (or experiential) factors acting together. In this presentation, we will review the current state of knowledge regarding the genetic contribution to psychiatric disorders, and will discuss how this knowledge can be used to help families living with psychiatric disorders. Case examples from the world's first specialist psychiatric genetic counseling clinic (based in Vancouver, Canada) will be used to illustrate how the service can improve outcomes for this population, and quantitative data about patient outcomes will be discussed. The process through which the service was established, and challenges encountered along the way will be briefly reviewed.