

Mental Health

Information for Families, Carers and Friends



**South Western Sydney
Local Health District**





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“Through my years of caring I have learnt that each day is a new day. Make time to have a quiet cuppa and stand outside and breathe in some fresh air. Every little thing helps.” - Carer



Introduction

Thankyou for taking the time to read this resource. We hope it will be useful to you in learning more about the important role you play as a carer, family member or friend of someone experiencing mental health challenges and in finding out where you can access information and support. This guide will help you to gain a greater understanding of the public mental health system and how it works. Whether you are new to caring or are an experienced long term carer, this guide is for you.

Living with mental health challenges can have a significant impact not only on the person experiencing them but also on the family and friends who care for them. If someone you are caring for is living with mental health issues you may be feeling worried and concerned for the future of your loved one.

Mental health is something we all have and many people experience periods of time where they struggle with their mental health. In Australia around one in five people will directly experience mental health issues each year (Mind Australia March 2017, 'The Economic Value of Informal Mental Health Caring in Australia') and many more people are indirectly affected as family, friends and carers.

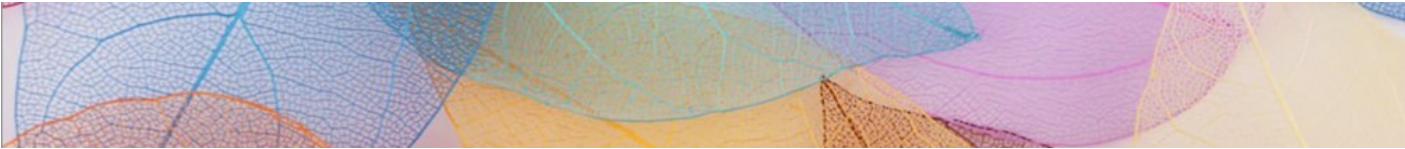
Family and friends play an important role in supporting someone with a lived experience and with good treatment, information, support and assistance most people recover and go on to achieve the goals and lives they wish for despite mental health challenges.

Recovery will look different for each person, their individual family members and families as a whole and in South Western Sydney we aim to ensure that families, carers and friends are respected and supported in their caring role.

How to Use this Booklet

This booklet is yours to keep and forms part of an information package provided to families and carers. There is space for you to write down any questions you may have. Please feel free to take it with you to appointments and refer to it as needed. We hope that you find it to be a helpful resource.

“Caring for someone with a mental illness can be challenging. We also recognise the challenges that carers and families have in navigating the mental health services available. This information booklet has been developed with you in mind. We hope this booklet can be beneficial for you and your family and provide you with some guidance on how the public mental health system works and what you can do to ensure that you and your loved ones receive the best care from our services.”
MH Executive Leadership Team



Who is a Carer?

The word 'carer' is used to describe a person who has an unpaid, ongoing responsibility for providing care and support to a family member or friend who is experiencing a mental health condition. Anyone can become a carer, at any point in their life and carers include parents, partners and friends. Children and young people who have a parent or sibling with mental health challenges can also be in a caring role. Carers may or may not live with the person they are caring for.

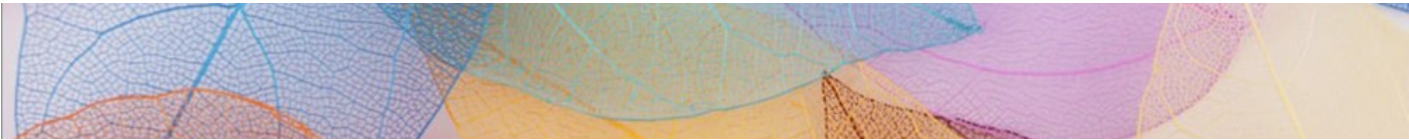
Often people who are caring for someone do not recognise themselves as a carer, seeing this role as something they just do to support and assist their loved one.

The caring role is varied and can include:

- ♦ Providing emotional support such as visiting, calling regularly, listening
- ♦ Providing meals, helping with cleaning, grocery shopping, caring for pets or other household needs
- ♦ Helping with appointments, transport, paying bills, remembering to take medication and other similar tasks
- ♦ Assisting the person to be involved in their interests
- ♦ Advocating with health professionals

“Growing into the role of carer was a very difficult thing to do because we started with nothing, we had to grow into this role through circumstance”— Carer

Initially we hid our daughters mental illness from everyone, we thought it was a personal thing so we kept it to ourselves “— Carer



Working Together

Families and carers play a critical role in supporting the recovery of loved ones with a lived experience. We greatly respect and value the knowledge, understanding and experience that you as families and carers have about the lived experience, preferences, strengths and needs of the person that you care for.

Throughout your loved one's journey we want to work in partnership with you and have you involved in their care and treatment wherever possible (with their consent). Families and carers have a right to be involved in planning and decision making processes and we will ensure that you have opportunities to do this and to communicate with the treating team.

This might include clinicians asking you about the history of the person you care for, involving you in review discussions, team members calling you and providing updates on their care and treatment, involvement in family meetings, care planning and discharge planning.

Due to privacy, confidentiality laws and some requirements of the Mental Health Act, clinicians involved in treating your loved one may not be able to answer all of your questions without the person's consent to share information with you.

Clinicians can answer general questions that will help you understand what your loved one is going through or provide information about mental health challenges, medication, side effects, treatment and recovery and they can always listen to and take into account any information you wish to share with them.

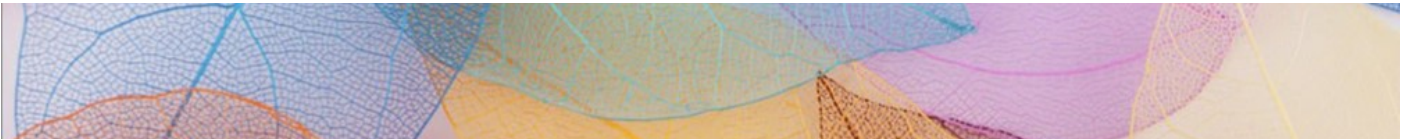
In working together with you, we are able to provide you with information and education about the best way you can support the person you care for.

We can also offer emotional support and referral to carer support services so that you can care for your own health and wellbeing.

Further information is available about mental health issues, the Mental Health Act and about caring for someone with mental health challenges. Please ask your mental health clinician for help with accessing more details, including referral to recommended services for families and carers.

"I love working with carers, they actually make my job easier because they know when their loved one is becoming unwell. Working with carers helps us (the treating team) and the consumer and helps restore trust knowing that we are working together to provide the best care for their loved one"

Clinician—Fairfield Community Mental Health Service



Communication

Understanding how to communicate in the health system can help assist you and the person you care about to have their needs met.

When you are feeling stressed or overwhelmed, it can be hard to communicate effectively. You may not be able to communicate in the same way that you normally would. It can be a challenge to feel calm, confident and to know what kinds of questions to ask.

Communicating with health professionals can be frustrating and confusing. Health workers can be very busy, they may use words that you are not familiar with or they may talk very quickly and not check that you are understanding what they are saying.

You are entitled to be treated with respect at all times and to ask the questions you would like to ask.

Tips for communicating with mental health professionals:

- ♦ Don't be afraid to ask questions. Spend some time thinking about the questions you would like to ask and write them down. When you have the opportunity to ask your questions write down the answers so you can look back over them later and clarify if needed
- ♦ Prepare for meetings by writing down any important information that you would like to share beforehand
- ♦ Try to remain calm and objective even if you don't feel that way
- ♦ Think about having a support person with you who can help you to stay on track and to get the information you need. This could be a Carer Peer Support Worker / advocate or a friend / relative
- ♦ Ask for information in words that you can understand
- ♦ Ask staff to write down information such as names of medication or unfamiliar words
- ♦ If you feel like you are not being heard it makes it hard to remain confident. If you feel like this please don't be afraid to speak up and tell the person you are talking to
- ♦ Talking openly is important. It will lead to a better understanding of your situation and that of the person you are caring for. It also gives you a chance to talk about your own needs and concerns





Key Contacts

Care Co-ordinator:

Contact:

Mental Health Unit:

Contact:

Doctor / Psychiatrist:

Contact:

Psychologist:

Contact:

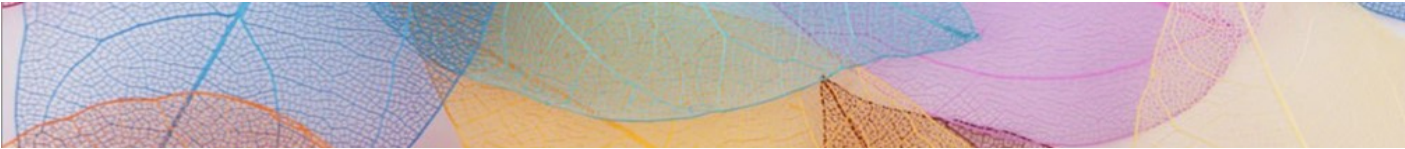
Social Worker:

Contact:

Carer Peer Support Worker:

Contact:

Other Contacts:



Recognition of Carers in the Mental Health Act

The NSW Mental Health Act 2007, in Section 68 under Principles of Care and Treatment recognises the important role of carers stating that: “(j) the role of carers for people with a mental illness or a mental disorder and their rights under this Act, to be kept informed, to be involved and to have information provided to them considered”

The NSW Carers (Recognition) Act 2010

The NSW Carers (Recognition) Act 2010 recognises the valuable role and contribution of carers in NSW.

The NSW Carers Charter is set out in Schedule 1 of the Act and contains 13 Principles that provide guidance on issues of significance for carers. Schedule 1 sets out the following:

1. Carers make a valuable contribution to the community

- a. NSW recognises the valuable social and economic contribution that carers make to the community
- b. Carers should have the same rights, choices and opportunities as other Australians
- c. Carers unique knowledge and experience should be acknowledged and recognised
- d. The relationship between carers and the people they care for should be respected

2. Carers health and wellbeing is important

- a. Carers should be supported to enjoy optimum health and wellbeing and to participate in family, social and community life, employment and education
- b. Carers should be supported to balance their caring role with other roles such as work and education

3. Carers are diverse and have individual needs within and beyond their caring role

- a. The diverse needs of carers should be acknowledged and recognised in policy, programs and service delivery, taking into consideration culture and language, age, socio-economic status, disability, place of residence, gender identity and sexual orientation
- b. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander values, heritage and concepts of caring should be respected and valued
- c. The additional challenges faced by carers who live in rural and remote areas should be acknowledged and recognised
- d. Children and young people who are carers should be supported to reach their full potential

4. Carers are partners in care

- a. The choices, views and needs of carers and of the people they care for should be taken into account in the assessment, planning, delivery and review of services
- b. Carers should be referred to, and assisted to access appropriate supports and services
- c. Support for carers should be timely, responsive, appropriate and accessible



Feelings you may experience in the caring role

Caring for someone you love can present some challenges but it can also be immensely rewarding. It is important to remember that everyone will have a unique experience in their caring role.

Often, caring for others is done in isolation with little emotional support or understanding from families, friends and workplaces.

Learning how to support someone experiencing mental health issues can be an overwhelming experience. You may have experienced significant stress during the period before your loved one's condition was recognised and further worry and anxiety about how and where to get help and access services.

You may now need to learn a new set of unfamiliar medical terms while also trying to make sense of your feelings, diagnosis, treatment, recovery and questions about what the future may hold. You will probably have many questions and you should feel open to ask them.

When someone experiences a mental health condition every member of the family is impacted in different ways, including parents, spouse, children and siblings, as well as friends. This can be a period of time that is overwhelming and confusing and many support people experience a wide range of feelings and emotions.

Carers **may** experience some of the following:

- ◆ Fatigue due to the physical and emotional demands of caring
- ◆ Uncertainty and frustration due to the challenges of navigating the mental health system
- ◆ Feeling overwhelmed and fearful
- ◆ Impacts on relationships with family and friends
- ◆ Becoming socially isolated
- ◆ Grief and Loss
- ◆ Guilt
- ◆ Anger
- ◆ Shock
- ◆ Feeling disconnected from the treating team
- ◆ Anxiety
- ◆ Depression
- ◆ Sleeping difficulties
- ◆ Physical health issues

It is important for carers to ask for help before any issues become too big.

When someone experiences a mental health condition every member of the family is impacted in different ways



Common Mental Health Conditions

Learning about mental health issues, how they affect your loved one and gaining an understanding of what they are going through is perhaps one of the most important things you can do for yourself and the person you care about. There are many different types of mental health issues and it is important to remember each person's experience will be different.

A mental health condition can significantly impact on a person's thoughts, feelings, behaviour and interactions with others. For some their ability to take part in everyday activities such as work, maintaining relationships and looking after themselves can be affected. Sometimes people with mental health challenges can behave in ways that are confronting, confusing and even frightening for those around them. Often these behaviours can be misunderstood so knowing how your loved one is affected is an important part of the caring role and a valuable tool in supporting their recovery journey.

Anxiety Disorders

A person with an anxiety disorder experiences excessive fear or worry to the point where it impacts on their ability to function. Symptoms can include feelings of extreme fear, phobias and obsessions. Anxiety is treatable and with the right treatment people can learn to manage anxiety so that it has less of an impact on their everyday lives.

Depression

Depression is a feeling of sadness and emptiness that doesn't go away. It can cause low self-worth, suicidal thoughts, fatigue and an inability to enjoy things that were once enjoyed by the person. There is a range of treatments that can help a person to manage depression.

Eating Disorders

Eating disorders are complex mental health issues and can have serious physical health consequences. They occur when someone develops an unhealthy obsession with food and eating. Eating disorders are most common in young people but can affect people of any age.

The most common eating disorders are anorexia nervosa, bulimia nervosa, binge eating disorder and other non specific types.



Bipolar Disorder

People experiencing bipolar disorder experience extreme changes in their mood, thinking, behaviour and energy that impacts on their daily life. They experience periods of depression alternating with periods of mania. Mania is characterised by excessive elation, inflated self esteem, hyperactivity, accelerated speaking and thinking.

Psychosis

Psychosis is an experience where a person's thought processes are impacted. Psychosis causes people to have trouble recognising what is real and what isn't. Someone experiencing psychosis may see, hear, feel or smell things that are not there and may have unusual ideas and beliefs.

Personality Disorder

A person experiencing personality disorder has a long term pattern of thinking, behavior and emotion that is extreme, inflexible and dysfunctional. There are many different types of personality disorders and people often develop the early signs during adolescence.





Treatment

The treatment of mental health conditions varies according to an individual's symptoms, the severity of the condition and their individual preferences. Most mental health issues can be treated effectively. The majority of people who receive and participate in treatment are likely to recover well. Mental health issues are like many physical illnesses which require ongoing treatment but can be managed so that the person can participate in everyday life.

Sometimes a mental health issue can come and go in a person's life. Some people have only one episode and recover completely. For others, mental health challenges can recur throughout life and or require ongoing treatment.

Mental health issues are not anyone's fault and there is no one to blame. A person with a mental health challenges cannot simply make their symptoms go away by themselves. Once you recognise signs of mental distress it is important to get treatment early.

There are many different treatments available to help people with a mental health challenges, which are designed to assist recovery and help people to function better.

Treatments can include:

- ◆ Medication
- ◆ Psychological therapies
- ◆ Medical treatments
- ◆ Social supports and connecting with family and friends
- ◆ Health and lifestyle changes such as exercise, sleep, dietary habits and managing stress
- ◆ Participating in pleasant and meaningful activities
- ◆ Counselling
- ◆ Skills training
- ◆ Peer support groups
- ◆ Self-help books
- ◆ Mental health education

Treatment is tailored to the individual and sometimes it is a complex process to find the right combination of medication and or other treatment options. Often treatment is not based strictly on diagnosis. People with the same diagnosis may have different experiences such as differing amounts of confusion, anxiety, depression or abnormal perceptions. The choice of treatment is often guided by the frequency or degree of these experiences rather than by diagnosis alone. Treatment choices are also influenced by the personal preferences of the person as well as the support the person has from families, carers and friends.





Treatment

Medication

Medication is just one treatment option and is often used alongside other strategies such as therapy and lifestyle changes. It can be needed for short periods of time or long term.

When a loved one is prescribed medication as a part of their treatment plan it can be helpful for families and carers to learn about what conditions the medication is used to treat, how it works, risks, benefits and any potential side effects it may cause.

It can sometimes be confusing and frustrating for families and carers when changes are made to medications. It is important to remember that the response to medication can vary from person to person and what works for one person may not work for another. This means that adjustments and changes are often needed to ensure that the person you care for is taking the right medication at the right dosage for them. Finding the right medication and dosage can take time.

There are many different medications that may be prescribed. The main ones are:

- ♦ medications that treat depression or low mood
- ♦ medications that treat anxiety
- ♦ medications that treat psychosis
- ♦ medications that stabilise mood

People often have different feelings and views about medication and this can become a point of tension between families and carers and the people they care for as well as between consumers, families, carers and mental health practitioners.

Both consumers and carers should have a role in decision making around medication. Please feel comfortable to ask any questions you have, to request information both verbally and in writing from the treating team and to voice your feelings about the use of medication. It can be helpful for the treating team to hear any insights you might have about the impact of medications on your loved one.

It is important to listen to the person you care for when they talk about their experience of taking medication, the impacts on them and any worries or concerns they may have and to advocate for their wishes to be heard by mental health professionals.

Our clinicians can help you to find out valuable information about medications. You can also access the South West Sydney Local Health District Mental Health page, Choice and Medications which contains printable leaflets, handy fact sheets and a book about how different medications work. www.choiceandmedication.org/southwesternsydneylhd/

Treatment should be about the whole person. There is no one 'right' treatment option.



Recovery

Recovery has been defined as “being able to create and live a meaningful and contributing life in a community of choice with or without the presence of mental health issues” – *from A National Framework for Recovery Oriented Mental Health Service 2013*.

Recovery can mean different things for different people. For some people, it will mean no longer having symptoms of their mental health condition. For others, it will mean managing their symptoms, regaining control of their life and learning new ways to live the life they want despite the presence of mental health issues.

Recovery is not straightforward, it is a process and includes times when a person is feeling well and times when symptoms return. This process involves moving from feelings of hopelessness, despair, anger and grief to feelings of hope, empowerment, choice, connectedness, identity and responsibility. Everyone’s experience of recovery will be different and people make their way through the journey of recovery in their own time and at their own pace.

Many families and carers may find that without further knowledge and information, they may have unrealistic expectations of recovery which can lead to feelings of frustration and resentment for everyone. Carers often feel that recovery means the person should be able to function as they were before diagnosis or experience of mental health issues. While this may be true for some, it may place undue pressure on the person experiencing mental distress or appear disconnected with their new reality, meaning and purpose.

Finding and holding onto hope is a key part of recovery for both consumers and families. Hope isn’t easy and requires believing in something even when you have no guarantees it will ever happen, however, believing in a positive future for the person you care about and helping them to see the endless possibilities for the future is very powerful and can make a huge impact.

Carers often put so much energy into the person they are caring for that they can put themselves last and forget to prioritise their own physical and mental wellbeing.



Recovery

We know that a person's recovery does not happen in isolation and that families, friends and carers actively support the recovery of their loved ones and walk alongside them while also being on a recovery journey of their own.

For families and carers to continue to support their loved ones it is important that they also have their own needs met and are supported to be able to move from feelings such as grief, loss, hopelessness, guilt, shame, confusion, anger, stress and fear to having hope and optimism for the future, not only when thinking about their loved one but also for their own lives, having social and professional supports and connections for themselves, moving beyond the role of "carer" and learning to manage their own distress and feeling empowered.

Make sure you get good professional help for yourself as well as your loved one, you might like to ask your mental health clinician for further information or referral to a specific carer support service that can help you.

Carer Voice - Their Recovery Journey

"I really didn't realise I was on my own recovery journey, but I was, while also supporting my loved one's recovery. I had to find who I was again, beyond my caring role and to develop strategies to manage my own distress, let go of the fear, stigma and guilt I felt. What helped me was connecting with people, listening to stories of hope and recovery, learning as much as I could, finding time and space just for me, being kind to myself, exercising, eating properly, journaling and seeking counselling. These things didn't change my responsibilities but they improved my strength, gave me a support system, increased my knowledge of how best to support my loved one, improved my relationships and gave me hope" - Carer



Consumer Voice - Their Recovery Journey

"The day that 'recovery' became such a confronting term for me was the day I realised that it wasn't going to be me returning to however I was before my illness, and was definitely not going to stick to a linear path like I imagined. It was truly going to be reinventing myself behind all the resilience. Approximately 2480 days later, I am here to tell you that mental illness is a burden, but having a mental illness doesn't make you the burden!" - Consumer





How can you support your loved one's recovery?

- ♦ Look for **hope** in even the smallest achievements and maintain a sense of hope
- ♦ Focus on the **positives**
- ♦ Be **patient**
- ♦ Promote **empowering** relationships based on **trust, empathy and respect**
- ♦ Encourage and practice **self-determination** and self learning
- ♦ Work in equal **partnership** with the person you care about and the treating team
- ♦ **Listen**



"Being able to talk to my daughter clearly with no expectations has helped me to care for myself"- Carer Quote



Looking After Yourself

When you care for someone with a lived experience it is important to make sure that you take steps to look after yourself. Providing care can be emotionally and physically demanding and can be an experience that leads you along unexpected and unfamiliar paths.

Many families and carers find it hard to focus on their own needs and often put them last while grappling with making sense of a wide range of emotions, information and many questions that are often difficult to get answers to. It is important that you understand that whatever you may be feeling at this point is not unusual and it may be helpful to find the space to share your feelings with people who have similar experiences or to seek counselling for yourself.

When you spend extra time with your loved one to meet their needs, it is easy to become overwhelmed and neglect your own needs. Things like meeting up with your friends, exercising, eating regular and healthy meals can be pushed aside. Finding a balance between work and leisure time may be tricky with extra demands on your time and you may have given up paid work or other plans in order to manage the extra challenges that caring can bring. Finding some time each day for yourself will increase your energy levels and your capacity to cope. Remember to focus on doing activities that you love, connect with positive support people in your life and be gentle with yourself along the way.

Some examples of things you can do to look after yourself

- ♦ Eat regular healthy meals
- ♦ Keep physically active or go for a walk
- ♦ Practice meditation and mindfulness
- ♦ Try to focus on at least one positive aspect of your day
- ♦ Get adequate rest and sleep
- ♦ Talk to a friend
- ♦ Spend time outdoors
- ♦ Listen to music you enjoy
- ♦ Engage in activities that you like doing (reading, knitting, baking, craft)
- ♦ Take a break
- ♦ Speak to your GP and access professional help and support for yourself
- ♦ Join a support group

“When I started to take a walk each day I felt so much better. I had a break, was outside in the fresh air and had time to think and breathe” - Carer



Family Relationships

When someone experiences mental health challenges it doesn't just impact on that one person. There can be a ripple effect and because everyone is unique and responds to traumatic and challenging experiences in their own way. Each member of the family (partner, parent, child or sibling) can be impacted in completely different ways.

Every day family life and routines may be disrupted, communication can become difficult, relationships within families can shift and change, family and friends could respond in ways that are surprising or hurtful to you and the best support may come from people and places you never imagined.

It is important to think about what each member of the family may be experiencing and to get supports in place to ensure the safety and wellbeing of all family members.

With the right support and care families can find new ways of being where there is space for healing and growth. Mental health service clinicians, carer peer support workers, your GP and carer support services in your local area can be a wealth of information and support and are best equipped to provide you with information about supports and services that are available for you.

Support For You

Finding and linking with the supports that work for you is very important as the more support you have, the more you will be able to continue to support your loved one. Stigma is something that can prevent people from seeking the support they need but finding the strength and courage to open up and be vulnerable with others can give you a huge sense of freedom. Remember that taking the step to engage with supports is a sign of strength and can be invaluable to both you and the person you are caring for.

Informal support networks

Some families have strong links with family and friends and prefer to rely on them for support. It can be comforting to know that they know you, your family and your situation however there may be times where speaking with someone outside of your circle of family and friends can give you the space to be more open and honest about how you are feeling and to accept feedback and advice they may be able to provide.

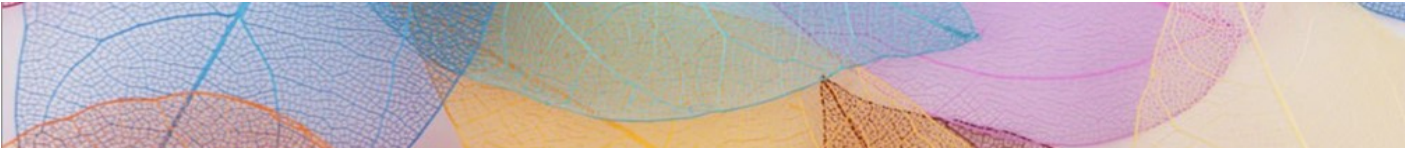
Counselling

Some families and carers find that talking to a counsellor, psychologist or other trained professional can be helpful because it gives them time to share their worries, fears and frustrations, to have their thinking challenged and to develop new skills and strategies.

Support Groups

Others find that talking with other families and carers who might be in a similar situation and have an understanding of what they are going through can build important connections, help relieve feelings of social isolation and be a source of encouragement and hope.

When it comes to support groups there are a range of options both in-person and on-line so you can find the one that fits for you.



Some Useful Strategies

- ♦ Find out everything you can about the mental health condition and the treatment options. Ask questions, read books, browse websites, join a support group, engage with carer support services and share what you learn with supportive family and friends.
- ♦ Develop an action plan in case of crisis. Ask someone in the Mental Health Service or carer support service to help you with this and write it down.
- ♦ Be flexible. Accept that there are some things in life you cannot control.
- ♦ Wherever possible involve your loved one, as well as the relevant services, in planning and decision making. Think about how you would feel in your loved one's shoes. They may feel afraid, powerless or angry. The opportunity to be involved in making decisions is an important part of their recovery.
- ♦ Learn relaxation techniques such as slow, deep breathing to help you remain calm, regardless of the circumstances.
- ♦ Keep important phone numbers and information on hand so that you can access them quickly if needed.
- ♦ Find out about emergency services offered by the Mental Health Service as well as ambulance and police.
- ♦ Aim to have balance in your life.

Privacy and Confidentiality

Mental health clinicians are keen to work with family members and carers and understand that families and carers need information about their relative or friends treatment plan. Clinicians also understand that families and carers play a vital role in supporting the recovery of their loved one, especially if they receive the appropriate information and support.

Sometimes, because of privacy, mental health clinicians may not be able to discuss some of the issues affecting your relative or friend. This will occur if your loved one does not give consent for the release of their information to you. This situation changes in the event that your relative or friend is receiving services under the Mental Health Act, and you are either a Designated Carer or Principal Care Provider under the Act. See the Mental Health Act section for further information.

As a family member, friend or carer you can still:

- ♦ Let the mental health clinician know about your concerns and the clinician can listen to your concerns without breaching confidentiality
- ♦ Provide valuable information and insights that could help the mental health clinicians to better care for your loved one
- ♦ Seek general information about ways to support your loved one
- ♦ Expect to be given adequate information to be able to care for your loved one



Different Roles You May Come Across in the Mental Health System

Care Coordinator

- ♦ Care Coordinators provide comprehensive assessment and education about mental health and related issues, coordination of the Care Plan and Consumer Wellness Plan, information and support to carers and access to services and programs that will assist the consumer in their recovery.

Consultant Psychiatrist

- ♦ A Senior doctor who has specialised in Psychiatry
- ♦ Consultants oversee the consumers treatment and care
- ♦ The Consultant Psychiatrist is responsible for the training and support of the registrar

Psychiatry Registrar

- ♦ A doctor who is training to be a Psychiatrist
- ♦ Registrars on the inpatient units are responsible for the day to day medical and psychiatric care of the consumer
- ♦ Registrars work under the supervision of a consultant psychiatrist

Nurse Unit Manager (NUM)

- ♦ The NUM is responsible for the day to day management of inpatient units

Team Leader

- ♦ Team leaders are responsible for Community Mental Health Teams

Nurse

- ♦ Nursing staff provide a range of care, treatment and therapies
- ♦ They can dispense medication, provide information and support, make referrals and liaise with other staff and organisations

Occupational Therapist (OT)

- ♦ Occupational therapists provide assessments and interventions related to:
 - Living at home (cooking, cleaning, nutrition)
 - Interpersonal skills
 - Money management
 - Healthy living and coping skills
 - Looking for or returning to work
 - Recreational Activities
 - Transport training and access to community facilities

Psychologist

- ♦ Psychologists provide a range of psychological treatments either individually or in group settings
- ♦ They also undertake psychological testing

Social Worker

- ♦ Social workers are clinicians who support consumers and their families to promote and enhance overall health and wellbeing. They conduct psychosocial assessments to provide strengths based, solution focused interventions. Social workers can link families, carers and consumers with appropriate services, advocacy, counselling and ongoing community support



Peer Support in Mental Health

The Mental Health Service has peer support services available for both consumers and carers.

Carer Peer Support Worker

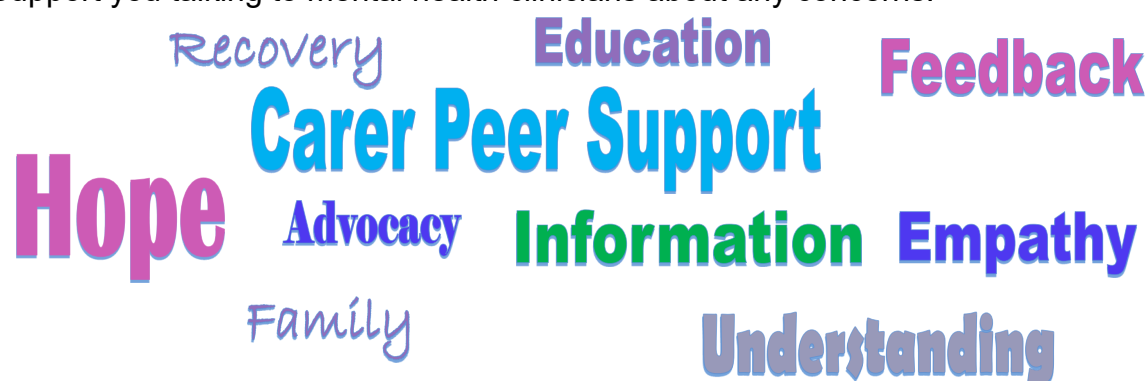
- ♦ A Carer Peer Support Worker has a lived experience of caring for someone with mental health issues and are employed by the Mental Health Service – SWSLHD
- ♦ A Carer Peer Support Worker is able to support carers / family and advocate on their behalf

A Carer Peer Support Worker understands that

- ♦ Supporting someone with mental health issues can be challenging and overwhelming
- ♦ Carers often have many different feelings and questions
- ♦ Carers need access to meaningful information and support
- ♦ Family and friends play an important role in a consumer's recovery
- ♦ Each person has a different experience and journey as a carer

Ways a Carer Peer Support Worker can assist you

- ♦ Provide support, understanding, information and resources
- ♦ Linking you with carer support, counselling and advocacy services in the community
- ♦ Share their lived experience as a carer
- ♦ Advise you of your rights and responsibilities as a carer
- ♦ Assist you to give feedback about the Mental Health Service that the person you care for is receiving
- ♦ Taking your suggestions and concerns to meetings with the Mental Health Service
- ♦ Support you talking to mental health clinicians about any concerns.



Consumer Peer Worker

- ♦ Consumer Peer Workers are people who have a lived experience of mental health issues.
- ♦ They are able to:
 - Support your loved one on their individual recovery journey
 - Be a support person when consumers attend a Mental Health Tribunal meeting
 - Go with your loved one to talk to health staff when you put forward your concerns
 - Advise consumers of their rights and responsibilities as a consumer of the Mental Health Service
 - Provide consumers with information, resources, supports and services that can support you and your recovery
 - Listen to your loved one and share with them their own experiences of mental health issues and recovery
 - Listen to suggestions for improving the Mental Health Service and contribute these suggestions at meetings within the Mental Health Service
 - Run groups



Community Mental Health Teams

South Western Sydney Local Health District has a wide range of Community Mental Health teams including Child and Adolescent Services, Adult Services and Older Person's Services.

Community Mental Health teams provide mental health care in the community for people who experience acute and severe mental health issues and or who have significant levels of risk to themselves or others. People with less acute conditions are seen by other services in the mental health system such as GP's.

Community Mental Health teams treat people in the community, helping them manage their condition in their own environment, close to family and carers, social support networks and workplaces.

Each team is made up of mental health clinicians from a range of professional backgrounds including nursing, social work, psychology and occupational therapy. Each clinician works with a specific group of consumers.

The support that a clinician or case manager provides will depend on the person's individual circumstances but may include support with social, vocational, educational, physical health or mental health needs, as identified by the consumer.

Inpatient Mental Health Units

South Western Sydney Local Health District has 15 mental health inpatient units located across the District. The inpatient units are:

Liverpool Hospital

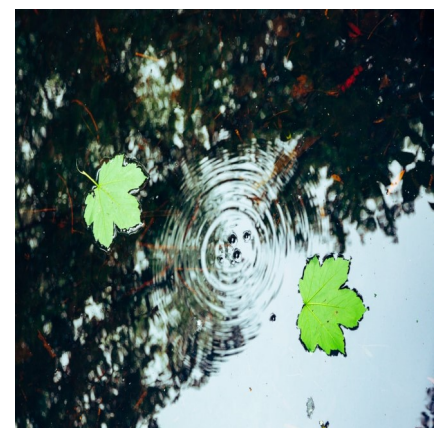
- ♦ Mental Health Unit East: Acute Adult Mental Health Unit for Fairfield area
- ♦ Mental Health Unit West: Acute Adult Mental Health Unit for Liverpool area
- ♦ Mental Health Unit North: Extended recovery adult mental health unit
- ♦ Mental Health Unit South: Sub-acute Adult Mental Health Unit
- ♦ Mental Health Unit PECC: Psychiatric Emergency Care Centre
- ♦ Mental Health Unit HDU: Mental Health Unit – High Dependency Unit

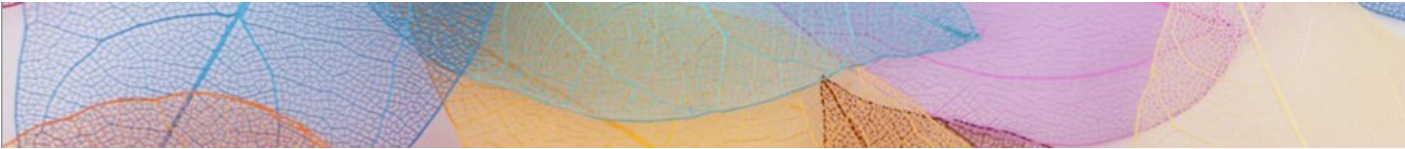
Bankstown Hospital

- ♦ Banks House: Acute Adult Mental Health Unit

Campbelltown Hospital

- ♦ Adult Acute Mental Health Unit
- ♦ High Dependency Unit
- ♦ Young Persons Mental Health Unit
- ♦ Acute Adolescent Mental Health Unit
- ♦ Short Stay Psychiatric Emergency Care Centre
- ♦ Older Persons Mental Health Unit
- ♦ MH Intensive Care Unit (MHICU)
- ♦ Statewide Rehabilitation Unit





The Mental Health Act

The NSW Mental Health Act 2007 and the Mental Health Amendment Act 2014

These Acts govern the care and treatment of people in NSW who experience a mental illness or mental disorder. The Act states that people with a mental illness or a mental disorder are to receive the most helpful care and treatment possible, in the least confined surroundings and that recovery is to be promoted.

Who is a mentally ill person under the Act?

A “mentally ill” person is someone who is experiencing a mental illness and due to this illness there are reasonable grounds for believing that care and treatment is necessary for the persons own protection from serious harm or for the protection of others from serious harm.

Who is a mentally disordered person under the Act?

A “mentally disordered person” is someone whose behaviour is considered to be so irrational that there are reasonable grounds for believing they require care and treatment to protect them and or others from serious harm.

Who does the Act provide for?

The Act makes provisions for the care of people who:

- ♦ Are admitted to hospital voluntarily
- ♦ Are admitted to and detained in hospital against their wishes (involuntary patient)
- ♦ Are required to receive treatment in the community
- ♦ Have committed an offence and are mentally ill (forensic patient)

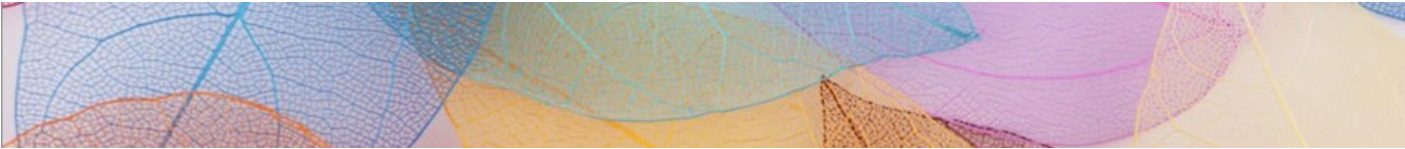
Who is a voluntary patient?

A voluntary patient is a consumer who:

- ♦ Has chosen to be admitted to a mental health unit
- ♦ Is under Guardianship and has been admitted at the request of or with the consent of their guardian
- ♦ Has been admitted as an involuntary patient and is reclassified by an agreement between the consumer and the treating team

Can a voluntary consumer be reclassified as an involuntary consumer?

Yes. If the treating team believes that the voluntary consumer is a mentally ill person or a mentally disordered person then your family member can be detained.



The Mental Health Act

Who can arrange for a person to be taken involuntarily to hospital for assessment?

This is called scheduling under the Act. Those who can write a schedule include:

- ♦ A medical practitioner
- ♦ Police and Ambulance officers
- ♦ An accredited person (specifically authorised mental health staff)
- ♦ A Court / Magistrate

What is the Mental Health Review Tribunal?

The Mental Health Review Tribunal is a specialist body constituted under the Mental Health Act. It has a wide range of powers that enable it to conduct mental health inquiries, make and review orders and hear appeals about the treatment and care of people with a mental illness. The Mental Health Tribunal panel consists of three members: a lawyer, a psychiatrist and another suitably qualified member. All tribunal members have significant experience in mental health and some have personal experience with a mental illness or caring for a person with a mental illness.

The Tribunal hearings are sometimes held in person or they may be held by video conference. The consumer has an opportunity to give their perspective and family members or carers also have opportunity to tell the Tribunal how they feel about the proposed order.

Who else can help?

The Mental Health Advocacy Service can represent people in hearings that relate to their detention and treatment in hospitals and the community and can provide free legal advice and assistance about mental health law. Families and carers are welcome to call them for advice. People are also able to arrange a private solicitor at their own expense.

Call LawAccess NSW on 1300888529

www.legalaid.nsw.gov.au/what-we-do/civil-law/mental-health-advice



The Mental Health Act

Who is a Mental Health Consumer?

A mental health consumer is a person who has a lived experience of a mental health illness or mental health disorder, and/or a person who is receiving treatment from a mental health service (either voluntarily or involuntarily).

What is a Designated Carer?

Designated carers are nominated by the consumer in most cases or identified by treating clinicians according to a hierarchy in the Act. Consumers can nominate up to two designated carers.

What is a Principal Care Provider?

The principal care provider is the individual who is primarily responsible for providing support and or care to a consumer (other than wholly or substantially on a commercial basis). A person in receipt of a carers pension is not seen as providing care on a commercial basis and can therefore be considered as a principal care provider.

The principal care provider may also be a designated carer of the person and has similar rights to information about a consumer as a designated carer.

An authorised officer or the Director of Medical Treatment may determine who the principal care provider of a consumer is. A person cannot be the principal care provider if they have been excluded by the consumer from being given notice or information. Treating clinicians are not required to give notice or information if they reasonably believe that to do so may put the consumer or principal care provider at serious risk of harm.

What is a Community Treatment Order (CTO)?

A Community Treatment Order is a legal order made by the Mental Health Review Tribunal. It sets out the terms under which a consumer must accept for example, medication and counselling. It is implemented by a Community Mental Health team. If the consumer does not comply with the Community Treatment Order they can be breached and taken to mental health facility for appropriate treatment.



The Mental Health Act

What rights does my family member / friend have?

The doctor or nurse admitting your family member must give them a copy of the Statement of Rights (schedule 3 – Statement of Rights for Persons Detained in a Mental Health Facility or Schedule 3A – Statement of Rights for Voluntary Patients) spelling out their legal rights and entitlements. You are welcome to ask for additional copies of this form from the treating team. Yourself and your loved one should also be provided with the South Western Sydney Local Health District brochure “Your Rights and Responsibilities”.

www.swslhd.health.nsw.gov.au/pdfs/YRAR_Patient_Guide.pdf

Official Visitors

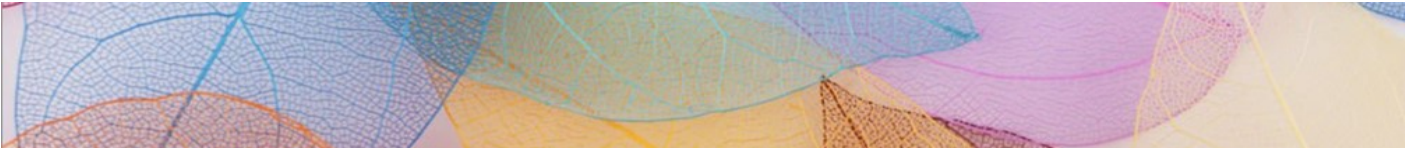


The Official Visitors Program aims to ensure that mental health care and treatment is always given in a humane and dignified way.

Official Visitors are appointed by the NSW Minister for Health and are independent from NSW Health. With a purpose to keep the humanity in mental health care, they visit public and private mental health facilities and emergency departments every month.

Official Visitors speak with consumers, inspect records and report on the standards of facilities and services. Families, carers, consumers and staff can contact the Official Visitors and they will listen to your concerns and help you to resolve them. There is an Official Visitors mail box in each mental health unit for messages and Official Visitors can be contacted on 1800 208 218. To find out more you can visit the Official Visitors Program Website at

www.officialvisitorsmh.nsw.gov.au



The Mental Health Act

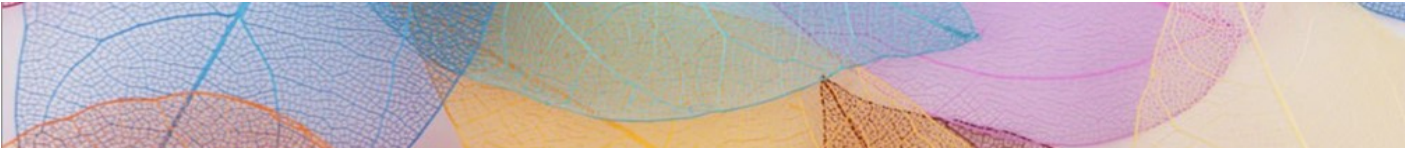
Notification of carers to certain events

Designated carers and the principal care provider are to be notified by the treating clinicians of events affecting the consumer such as when a consumer is:

- ◆ Detained in a mental health facility
- ◆ Absent from the facility without permission, or fails to return at the end of a period of leave
- ◆ To be discharged
- ◆ Reclassified or admitted as a voluntary patient
- ◆ Considered for a Community Treatment Order (CTO) and an application is being made to the Mental Health Review Tribunal
- ◆ Under a Community Treatment Order that is being varied or revoked
- ◆ Considered for Electroconvulsive Therapy (ECT) and an application is being made to the Mental Health Review Tribunal
- ◆ Believed to require a surgical procedure or special medical treatment and consent is being sought from the Tribunal or the Ministry of Health
- ◆ To be transferred, or has been transferred, between mental health facilities

Designated carers and the principal care provider can make a request to:

- ◆ Have the consumer they are caring for admitted to a mental health facility
- ◆ Be provided with information about the types and dosages of medication being administered to the consumer
- ◆ Have an Official Visitor visit
- ◆ Have the consumer they are caring for discharged from a mental health facility and appeal to the Tribunal against a refusal to discharge the consumer



Dual Diagnosis

When a person has a drug and alcohol issue and a mental health issue this is called a dual diagnosis or co-morbidity. Drug and alcohol use is widespread in the population of people who have been diagnosed with a mental health issue. Sometimes because of the complex nature of dual diagnosis it can take a while for a diagnosis to be made.

What causes dual diagnosis?

There are a number of theories around that explain why dual diagnosis occurs including the following:

- ♦ Sometimes the substance taken can cause a mental health issue like a drug induced psychosis
- ♦ Some people report using substances as a way of managing symptoms associated with their mental health issue however this is a strategy that only works for a very brief period of time before a person's mental health starts to decline and their tolerance to drugs increases
- ♦ The drug and alcohol and mental health issues develop separately but their interaction has significant negative consequences for the person
- ♦ The person is more at risk if they have experienced an adverse life event or stress which they have struggled to cope with and/or a family member has a substance problem and/or a mental health condition

What treatment is available for people who have dual diagnosis?

Each person's experience of dual diagnosis is different so it is important that your family member obtains specialist treatment for both conditions. This helps reduce the significant physical and psychological impacts on a person's health. This means is that your loved one may have a treatment team including staff from mental health and drug and alcohol services. Evidence suggests that treatment is not as effective if it is only addressing either the mental health or the drug and alcohol issue.

NDIS

The National Disability Insurance Scheme is a funding scheme for individuals living with a severe and long term disability, including those with mental health issues or psychosocial disability. The NDIS can provide people with a disability with information and connection to supports and services to help them gain skills and be independent.

To be eligible for NDIS your loved one's mental health condition will have a significant impact on their day to day life in at least one of the areas listed below.

- ♦ Social Interaction
- ♦ Learning
- ♦ Mobility
- ♦ Self-Care
- ♦ Self-management

Your loved one's treating team can assist with access to the NDIS and information and support about the planning process. Although the NDIS primarily supports the person with the permanent and significant disability, their NDIS funded supports and services may also have a direct or indirect benefit for families and carers. The information provided by families and carers about their loved one's needs or capacity from their point of view is also very valuable in the planning process. For more information please see www.ndis.gov.au



Aboriginal Mental Health Services

Many Aboriginal people share the dual role of consumer and carer and for the reasons mentioned below, are often overrepresented in Mental Health Services.

For many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people (Indigenous Australians), good mental health is indicated by feeling a sense of belonging, having strong cultural identity, maintaining positive interpersonal relationships, and feeling that life has purpose and value (Dudgeon & Walker 2015) Conversely, poor mental health can be affected by major stressors such as removal from family, incarceration, death of a close friend or family member, discrimination and unemployment, as well as stressors from everyday life (PM&C 2017; Gee et al. 2014).

The legacies of colonisation and the ongoing trauma experienced by Indigenous Australians also affect mental health. Dispossession from land, forced removal of Indigenous children from families, and institutionalised racism have enduring effects on social and emotional wellbeing (Dudgeon & Walker 2015).



Aboriginal Mental Health workers provide a range of interventions and support for Aboriginal consumers of Mental Health Services. The Aboriginal Mental Health workers provide a safe cultural space by consulting and liaising with staff, consumers and family, providing advocacy and consultation with other services to provide holistic care and support. Aboriginal Mental Health workers are located in Bankstown, Fairfield, Liverpool and Macarthur Mental Health Services. The staff you are working with can put you in touch with the Aboriginal Mental Health Worker.

<https://www.13yarn.org.au/>



Transcultural Mental Health Centre

It can sometimes be more difficult for families and carers from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds to access services and supports. Some challenges include shame and stigma associated with poor mental health, language and cultural barriers or a limited understanding of the Australian healthcare system. Many people who live in South Western Sydney also come from a refugee and/or asylum seeker background and as such, have a history of torture and trauma and complex mental health issues.

The Transcultural Mental Health Centre provides carer support groups and information for people from a wide range of different languages, cultures and religions. For more information contact:

Phone: 02 9912 3850

Website: www.dhi.health.nsw.gov.au/tmhc



Interpreter Services

Interpreters are available to all consumers, family, carers and friends. Our staff can help organise this for you. An Interpreter can be present during treatment reviews, case conferences, family / carer interviews and Mental Health Inquiries / Tribunal. Interpreters can provide support either face to face or over the telephone. The Interpreter telephone service is available 24hrs per day and they can be contacted on **13 14 50**

LGBTIQ+ Populations

57% of LGBTIQ+ people nationally experienced high or very high levels of psychological distress compared to 13% of the general population. (NSW LGBTIQ+ Strategy 2021). The SWS Mental Health Service is committed to inclusivity of all people identifying in the LGBTIQ + population. Welcome Here stickers are displayed across mental health facilities to ensure a safe and welcoming space for all as well as Gender Affirmative Practices in our Youth and Adolescent Units.

www.acon.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/HERE-W1.jpg





Visiting an Inpatient Unit

We know how important family and friends are in supporting a person's recovery so we encourage you to visit the person you care for during visiting hours.

Unfortunately there are times, such as during COVID-19 lockdowns that we have been unable to have visitors in our mental health units. If this situation occurs please rest assured that our teams will have strategies in place to help maintain your connection with your loved one and to keep you informed about their progress.

Mental health inpatient units have a secure entry so staff will let you in to visit your family member or friend.

There are some things that aren't allowed to be taken into a mental health unit in order to keep everyone safe. Some examples of these include cigarette lighters and plastic bags. You should check with the mental health unit to find out what these things are.

Children are welcome to visit however it is important that this is well managed. Please talk to our staff before bringing a child into visit. Children should be well supervised by a responsible adult at all times. Some mental health units have family rooms available that provide a safe and comfortable space for families to visit.

REACH

We know that you know your loved one best. This is why we want you to let us know if you notice changes that you are worried about.

REACH is a communication process which will help you share your concern with us. In our mental health units you have access to a dedicated REACH phone to call and request an emergency response if needed.

REACH stands for:

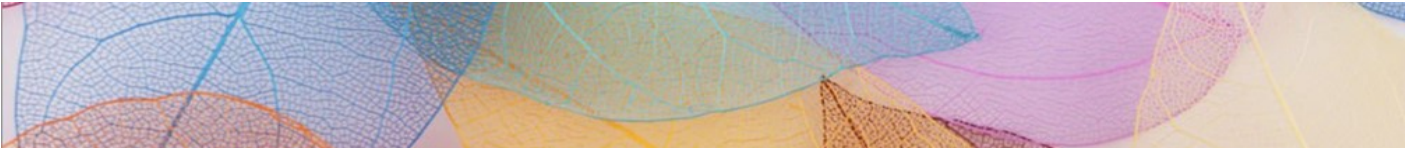
Recognise Engage Act Call Help is on its way

If you recognise a worrying change, talk with the nurse that is looking after your loved one about your concerns.

If your concern isn't responded to or your loved one is getting worse, ask to speak to a nurse in charge and request a clinical review.

If you are still concerned, locate or request nursing staff to direct you to the nearest phone to call REACH.

R	Recognise
E	Engage
A	Act
C	Call
H	Help is on its way



Giving a Compliment or Making a Complaint

The Mental Health Service welcomes feedback including complaints or compliments. Families and carers are encouraged to identify and report when things are not quite right and staff are encouraged to talk openly to the consumer and/or carer about a matter. We value the feedback and are keen to use it to continually improve our services.

Compliments

Compliments provide a clear indication of what you seek in high quality care for your loved one. They also boost morale and encourage employees. Compliments can be made directly to staff, to the team leader or local Service Director or via the hospital's Patient Liaison Officer.

Complaints

Your relative or friend has a right to receive quality services. This right is not affected by providing feedback and your complaint may help to improve services. When making a complaint, try to remain calm and be as clear as possible about what happened and how you would like it resolved. If you have any questions or are concerned about the treatment of your loved one or yourself, we encourage you to pursue the following options.

Option 1

Discuss your concerns with the Nursing Unit Manager, doctor or other health professional involved in the treatment of your loved one. They may be able to resolve the issues immediately or they can refer you to a more senior member of staff. This is the preferred way to raise your concern and have it resolved.

It is a good idea to keep a note of the time and date of any discussion, what was discussed and what agreements might have been reached.

If you do not wish to take this option then the following alternatives below are available.

Option 2

Contact the Mental Health Patient Experience Manager.

The Patient Experience Manager is independent of the ward/team and will investigate the issues raised and provide you with the result of the investigation.

The Mental Health Patient Experience Manager Contact number is 0438 595 284

Option 3

If you are still not satisfied with the response, contact SWSLHD Designated Senior Complaints Officer Clinical Governance 8738 6923

Or write to:

Chief Executive

C/O South Western Sydney Local Health District

Liverpool Hospital, Eastern Campus

Locked Bag 7279, Liverpool BC NSW 1871

Option 4

The Health Care Complaints Commission (HCCC) is an independent body that deals with complaints about health care practitioners and services.

Telephone: 1800 043 159

Website: www.hccc.nsw.gov.au



Family and Carer Involvement in the Mental Health System

South Western Sydney Local Health District welcomes and supports the involvement of mental health families, carers and consumers in the Mental Health Service. Involvement can include representation on the Mental Health Consumer, Carer and Community Committee (MHCCCC), The committee is made up of people with lived experience of mental health challenges and their carers. The MHCCCC's aim is to work with the mental health staff and the Executive to improve the safety, access and quality of services for people with a lived experience (either as a family member/carers or consumer).

What is lived experience?

Lived experience is the knowledge and understanding you get when you have lived through something. In this case we mean living with a mental health issue or caring for and supporting someone experiencing a mental health condition.

How do I become involved?

If you have an interest in improving the health system, a willingness to work with staff to improve the mental health service, and are able to relate your own experience of healthcare to broader issues please register your interest via the ENGAGE Platform on :

<https://engage.swslhd.nsw.gov.au>

The Mental Health Consumer and Carer Engagement Manager will contact you following your enquiry.

We need your feedback

The Mental Health Service values you and the person you care about. We need your feedback about the service you have been provided with so that we can continue to learn and make necessary changes either to our practice or to the environment, facilities and services we provide. You can do this either by talking directly with us or by completing the **Mental Health Carer Experience Survey (CES)**

This survey is about your experiences as a carer over the last three months. By completing this survey, you will help the service better understand how to work with carers towards the recovery of mental health consumers.

Your feedback is important and completion of the survey is voluntary. All information collected is anonymous and cannot be used to identify you. Each service has a unique code and staff can help you with this. Alternatively signage across the facilities will help you to identify which code you need to provide feedback about the service your loved one has received.

The survey can be completed:

- ♦ in paper format
- ♦ using your smartphone camera
- ♦ QR code app to scan a barcode
- ♦ on your computer go to:-
www.yourexperience.health.nsw.gov.au





Questions you might like to ask Mental Health Professionals

We encourage family members and carers to ask questions of our staff.

- ◆ Who is the person I should contact in the treating team?
- ◆ What is the best way and time for me to make contact with them?
- ◆ Has my loved one nominated a designated carer?
- ◆ Has a principal care provider been nominated?
- ◆ How will the treating team communicate with me?
- ◆ What can I do to support the person I care about?
- ◆ Will we be involved in discussions about treatment and planning?
- ◆ Do you have a carer peer support worker?
- ◆ What support can I have in meetings?
- ◆ What are my rights and responsibilities?
- ◆ Is there a copy of a discharge plan I can have?
- ◆ Is there a diagnosis?
- ◆ If there is no diagnosis, what are the possibilities?
- ◆ What has led to this diagnosis?
- ◆ What signs and symptoms suggest this?
- ◆ Can I get a second opinion?
- ◆ Where can I get information about what my loved one is experiencing?
- ◆ What tests have been done and will any more be done?
- ◆ Are there any physical problems that have been noticed?
- ◆ What are the aims of care and treatment?
- ◆ What is the treatment plan?
- ◆ Who is involved in the treatment?
- ◆ What happens if my loved one refuses treatment?
- ◆ What are the advantages and disadvantages of hospital treatment?
- ◆ What other options are there?
- ◆ If they are in hospital, what is the likely length of stay?
- ◆ Will we be involved in discharge planning?
- ◆ What medication is going to be used and why?
- ◆ What are the possible side effects?
- ◆ Do you have any written information I could have?
- ◆ Are both mental health and drug and alcohol issues being addressed?
- ◆ When can I visit?
- ◆ Is there anything else I need to know?

Family and Carer Support Services

One Door Mental Health Carers Program offers information, education, advocacy and emotional support:

Bankstown:	0478 404 658
Liverpool / Fairfield:	0439 257 138
Campbelltown / Camden:	0423 767 501
Wollondilly / Wingecarribee:	0448 029 985
Vietnamese Speaking:	0478 404 662
Website:	www.onedoor.org.au



Carer Gateway offers practical advice and support for carers including counselling, emergency respite, an on-line forum to connect with other carers, self guided coaching and skills courses

Phone: 1800 422 737 Website: www.carergateway.gov.au

Carers NSW provides information, education, referrals and support to all carers living in NSW

Phone: 9280 4744 Website: www.carersnsw.org.au

Mental Health Carers NSW provides support and education for carers

Phone: 9332 0777 Website: www.mentalhealthcarersnsw.org/

[Resource Library Archive - Mental Health Carers NSW](#)

Mental Health Line is a 24 hour mental health line that provides professional support, advice and referral to local mental health services throughout NSW

Mental Health Line
1800 011 511

Beyond Blue (24 hour Support)

Phone: 1300 224 636 Website: www.beyondblue.org.au

Sane Australia Helpline offers phone and on-line counselling support by qualified counsellors to people living with mental health conditions and the people who support them.

Phone: 1800 18 7263 Website: www.sane.org

Life Line Australia provides 24 hour crisis support and suicide prevention services to anyone experiencing or concerned about someone experiencing emotional distress.

Phone: 13 11 14 Website: www.lifeline.org.au

Little Dreamers provides in person peer support to young carers via carer gateway

The Young Carers Program at Carers NSW provides information, referral and support to young carers 25 years and under across NSW

Phone: 9280 4744 Website: www.youngcarersnsw.org.au



Notes

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Notes

[illegible]



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www.healthdirect.gov.au/caring-for-someone-with-a-mental-illness#affects
www.sane.org
www.wayahead.org.au/get-the-facts/carers-looking-after-yourself-and-your-family/
www.mentalhealthcarersnsw.org
www.choiceandmedication.org
www.mhrt.nsw.gov.au
www.carersnsw.org.au
www.beyondblue.org.au
www.ndis.gov.au
www.mindaustralia.org.au
www.headspace.org.au/
www.headtohealth.gov.au/
www.13yarn.org.au/
[Here - HERE is ACON's digital hub for information on suicide and situational distress, connecting LGBTQ+ people, their loved ones, and service providers in NSW to care, support, and resources.](#)

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“Family Peer Support is about identifying and connecting, there CAN be light at the end of the tunnel, lets work with that” - Carer Peer Support Worker



Acknowledgements

Thankyou to all who have contributed to the creation of this resource for families and carers and for the generosity they have shown in sharing their stories. Thankyou to Tracey Billett, CPSW and Jacqueline Stanbury, CCE Manager from SWS Mental Health Service for their work in creating this resource.

This resource has been developed in consultation with consumers and carers from the MHCCCC (Mental Health Consumer Carer Community Committee) and other carers across the SWSLHD Mental Health Service.

Thankyou to One Door Mental Health who are our partners in the Family and Carer Mental Health Program for their support and feedback in the development of this resource.

SWS Mental Health Service also thanks Northern Sydney Local Health District for allowing our service to adapt parts of the booklet - *Mental Health Drug and Alcohol Family and Carer Information Guide, Second Edition 2019*.

Disclaimer

All possible care has been taken in the preparation of the information in this resource. The producers of this resource shall not be held liable or negligent for the accuracy of information. The information provided is to be used for support and educational purposes only. It should not be used as a substitute for seeking professional care.

Thankyou to SWSLHD Carers Program for assisting with funding of this resource