



# MI Fact Sheet Series

UNDERSTANDING AND MANAGING MENTAL ILLNESS

## Family and carer supports and services

### Family support services

#### Specialist Family Support Services and Mutual Support and Self-Help Services

Organisations such as the Mental Illness and Schizophrenia fellowships and ARAF(E)MIs were founded to offer supports and services to assist families in managing the impact of mental illness.

These agencies offer services such as counselling, information and peer support primarily to carers/families and also to people with a mental illness. Education programs including Well Ways can be helpful for families as well as Double Trouble which addresses issues for families of people with dual diagnosis. The lived experience of mental illness and the family is the focus of these programs and they assist people to manage the impact of mental illness on their lives.

Other services may include phone support, support groups, referrals and advocacy, both on individual and systems levels and respite options.

Contact your local Fellowship or ARAF(E)MI to find out which services are offered locally.

### Caring Supports

#### Carer Associations and Commonwealth Carer Resource Centres

##### Carers Associations

In each state and territory there is a Carers Association working to bring the needs, views and concerns of carers to the attention of the community as a whole including government, policy makers, health professionals and service providers.

The Associations all operate a Commonwealth Carer Resource Centre and carry out carer advocacy as well as supporting carers with counselling, support groups and education and training activities.

Each Carers Association operates independently and offers a range of services and support such as information and referral services, carer support services such as counselling, carer support groups and friendship groups, advocacy, carers newsletters, community development, education and development, research and policy, and respite coordination.

Contact details for your local Carer association are listed at the end of this sheet.

#### Commonwealth Carer Resource Centres

Commonwealth Carer Resource Centres are a part of the Carers Association in each State and Territory and provide carers with referral to services and practical written information to support them in their caring role. Carers can receive services and free information on a range of topics, including support services, counselling, emotional support, home help, respite, health and well-being, financial entitlements, legal matters, safety at home and managing medications, carer support groups, loss and grief.

Contact on 1800 242 636 to speak to a staff member and to receive tailored information on a range of topics, referrals, support, counselling and resources. Most of these services are free.

#### Commonwealth Carer Respite Centres

There are over 80 Commonwealth Carer Respite Centres around Australia to support carers to access respite or "take a break". The centres can provide:

- information and advice about respite options
- help with organising emergency or planned respite
- financial assistance for short-term or emergency respite when needed

Commonwealth Carer Respite Centres can be contacted on 1800 059 059.

#### Other carer services

There are some other services that are offered in some regions of Australia but not others. The following are some:

**Mental Health Carer Resource Workers** are located (in the main) in regional Respite Centres. Their role is to offer programs based on the needs of carers including respite coordination, information, support and referrals.

**Carer Consultants** are located in many Area Mental Health Services throughout the country. Although their role varies, many provide practical and emotional support to family members whose relative is using the service.

**Carers Australia** is the peak body for carers in Australia. It represents the needs and interests of carers at the national level through advocating for carers needs and interests in the public arena, influencing government

and stakeholder policies and programs at the national level, networking and forming strategic partnerships with other organisations to achieve positive outcomes for carers, and providing carers with information and education resources, undertaking community awareness raising activities and coordinating and facilitating joint work between the state and territory organisations on matters of national significance.

T: 02 6122 9900

E: [caa@carersaustralia.com.au](mailto:caa@carersaustralia.com.au)

## Financial supports

A number of different schemes exist that financially support people in the caring role.

### Carer Payment

Administered by Centrelink this scheme was previously known as the Carer Pension and designed to financially support people who need to use their time caring for the person with an illness and so are unable to work. The payment entails:

- A fortnightly payment, and you might also receive:
- A pension concession card
- Rent assistance
- Telephone allowance
- Pharmaceutical allowance

An income and assets tests apply to this payment. Carers need to substantiate their claim via both themselves and one of the treating professionals completing forms and returning them to Centrelink. In order to receive this payment the level of disability must be great enough to warrant the carer spending the substantial amount of time 'caring' for that person, but the person does not need to be residing with the carer.

### Carer Allowance

Administered by Centrelink this scheme compensates people for some of the costs associated with being the primary carer of someone with a mental illness. The payment entails:

- A fortnightly Carer Allowance plus a Health Care Card or a Health Care Card only (if the person you are caring for is under 16 years of age)
- A fortnightly payment (If the person you are caring for is over 16 years of age)

No income or assets tests exist for the Carer Allowance and it can be paid in addition to the Carer Payment or other Centrelink payments such as the Age Pension.

To be eligible for this payment carers must:

- Substantiate their claim by themselves and one of the treating professionals filling out a form and returning it to Centrelink

- Be looking after a child or an adult with a severe disability or medical condition who needs a lot of additional care and attention, and
- Be living with that person
- Show that the nature of the disability is long term

You need to make an appointment with the Social Worker at Centrelink to make application for both the Carer Payment and Carer Allowance.

### Carer Brokerage Funds

In some regions, area mental health services also have access to funds designed to financially support carers to maintain their caring role. This initiative helps families and carers to meet their needs in caring for a relative or a friend with serious mental illness. Applications for this fund are generally through Case Managers. These are often one-off payments to alleviate a financial burden that has arisen as a result of caring. Local guidelines apply.

### Carer Mental Health Program

Mental Health Carer Resource Workers, where these are available, are able to assist carers financially in a limited capacity for practical and emotional support. Application should be made to them individually.

## Useful References

Mental Illness Fellowship of Australia  
[www.mifellowshipaustralia.org.au](http://www.mifellowshipaustralia.org.au)

Mental Illness Fellowship Victoria  
[www.mifellowship.org](http://www.mifellowship.org)

National Alliance of the Mentally Ill  
[www.nami.org](http://www.nami.org)

Carers Australia  
[www.carersaustralia.com.au](http://www.carersaustralia.com.au)

SANE Australia  
[www.sane.org](http://www.sane.org)

## Carer Associations

### ACT

Carers ACT  
[www.carersact.asn.au](http://www.carersact.asn.au)  
T: 02 6296 9900  
F: 02 6296 9999  
E: [carers@carersact.asn.au](mailto:carers@carersact.asn.au)

### NSW

Carers NSW  
[www.carersnsw.asn.au](http://www.carersnsw.asn.au)  
T: 02 9280 4744  
F: 02 9280 4755  
E: [contact@carersnsw.asn.au](mailto:contact@carersnsw.asn.au)

### NT

NT Carers Association  
[www.ntcarers.asn.au](http://www.ntcarers.asn.au)  
T: 08 8948 4877  
F: 08 8948 5288  
E: [carersnt@ntcarers.asn.au](mailto:carersnt@ntcarers.asn.au)

### QLD

Carers Queensland  
[www.carersqld.asn.au](http://www.carersqld.asn.au)  
T: 07 3843 1401  
F: 07 3843 1403  
Commonwealth Carer Resource Centre  
T: 07 3421 5900  
F: 07 3324 1281  
E: [info@carersqld.asn.au](mailto:info@carersqld.asn.au)

### SA

Carers Association of SA  
[www.carers-sa.asn.au](http://www.carers-sa.asn.au)  
T: 08 8271 6288  
F: 08 8271 6388  
E: [info@carers-sa.asn.au](mailto:info@carers-sa.asn.au)

### TAS

Carers Tasmania  
[www.carerstas.org](http://www.carerstas.org)  
T: 03 6231 5507  
F: 03 6236 9236  
E: [catinc@carerstas.org](mailto:catinc@carerstas.org)

### VIC

Carers Victoria  
[www.carersvic.org.au](http://www.carersvic.org.au)  
T: 03 9650 9966  
F: 03 9650 8066  
E: [cav@carersvic.org.au](mailto:cav@carersvic.org.au)

### WA

Carers WA  
[www.carerswa.asn.au](http://www.carerswa.asn.au)  
T: 08 9444 5922  
F: 08 9444 8966  
E: [info@carerswa.asn.au](mailto:info@carerswa.asn.au)

# Family and carer supports and services continued...

MIF513/1-05

Designed and produced by ArtWords 03 9497 4871

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**PUBLISHED BY:**  
**mental illness  
fellowship victoria**  
for people with mental illness,  
their families and friends



**FOUNDATION PARTNER ACKNOWLEDGED:**

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[Your partner in integrated health care]

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[www.mifellowshipaustralia.org.au](http://www.mifellowshipaustralia.org.au)  
**Mental Illness Fellowship of  
Sth Australia Inc**  
08 8221 5160 [www.mifsa.org.au](http://www.mifsa.org.au)

**NT Assoc of Relatives & Friends of  
the Mentally Ill Inc (NT ARAFMI)**  
08 8948 1051 [www.ntarafmi.org.au](http://www.ntarafmi.org.au)  
**Schizophrenia Fellowship of NSW Inc**  
02 9879 2600 [www.sfnsw.org.au](http://www.sfnsw.org.au)

**Mental Illness Fellowship Victoria**  
03 8486 4200 [www.mifellowship.org](http://www.mifellowship.org)  
**Mental Illness Fellowship Nth Qld Inc**  
07 4725 3664 [www.mifnq.org.au](http://www.mifnq.org.au)

**Schizophrenia Fellowship of Qld Inc**  
07 3358 4424 [www.sfq.org.au](http://www.sfq.org.au)  
**Mental Illness Fellowship of WA Inc**  
08 9228 0200 [www.mifwa.com](http://www.mifwa.com)  
**Canberra Schizophrenia Fellowship Inc**  
02 6205 1349