



well ways helping families & friends find better ways

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 to carers/families and to people with a mental illness. Education programs including Well Ways can be helpful for families as well as Well Ways Duo 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 via Helpline, support groups, referrals and advocacy, both on individual and systems levels. Respite is often provided through these agencies. See description of respite services under Commonwealth Carer Respite Centres on this fact sheet.

Contact your local MI Fellowship or ARAFMI to find out which services are offered locally.

Local mental health services may provide family therapy based programs for families and people with mental illness such as Behavioural Family Therapy. Support for families and relapse prevention are the focus for these types of programs.

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, education and training activities.

Each Carers Association operates independently and offers a range of services and supports 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

The following are other services that are offered in some regions of Australia:

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 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.

Family and carer supports and services continued...

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

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. Additional payments and benefits you may be entitled to:

- Education Entry Payment
- Employment Entry Payment
- Rent Assistance
- Telephone Assistance
- Remote Area Allowance

- a \$500 advance payment of Carer Payment may be available
- you may be eligible for a Pensioner Concession Card
- a Pensioner Education Supplement may be payable.

An income and assets test applies to the carer 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. Carers can work up to 25hrs per week.

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
- Show that the nature of the disability is long term

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.

Useful References

Mental Illness Fellowship of Australia
www.mifa.org.au

Mental Illness Fellowship Victoria
www.mifellowship.org

National Alliance of the Mentally Ill
www.nami.org

Carers Australia
www.carersaustralia.com.au

SANE Australia
www.sane.org

Centrelink
131794

Commonwealth Carer Resource Centre
1800 242 636

Commonwealth Carer Respite Centre
1800 059 059

Carer Australia
02 6122 9900
E: caa@carersaustralia.com.au

ARAFMI
www.arafmiaustralia.asn.au

Carer Associations

ACT

Carers ACT
www.carersact.asn.au
T: 02 6296 9900
F: 02 6296 9999
E: carers@carersact.asn.au

Mental Illness Fellowship of the ACT Inc
T: 02 6205 2021
www.mifact.org.au

NSW

Carers NSW
www.carersnsw.asn.au
T: 02 9280 4744
F: 02 9280 4755
E: contact@carersnsw.asn.au

Schizophrenia Fellowship of NSW Inc
T: 02 9879 2600
www.sfnsw.org.au

NT

NT Carers Association
www.ntcarers.asn.au
T: 08 8948 4877
F: 08 8948 5288
E: carersnt@ntcarers.asn.au

Mental Health Carers NT
T: 08 8948 1051
www.mentalhealthcarersnt.org

QLD

Carers Queensland
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

Schizophrenia Fellowship of Qld Inc
T: 07 3358 4424
www.sfq.org.au

Mental Illness Fellowship Nth Qld Inc
T: 07 4725 3664
www.mifnq.org.au

SA

Carers Association of SA
www.carers-sa.asn.au
T: 08 8271 6288
F: 08 8271 6388
E: info@carers-sa.asn.au

Mental Illness Fellowship of Sth Australia Inc
T: 08 8221 5160
www.mifsa.org

TAS

Carers Tasmania
www.carerstas.org
T: 03 6231 5507
F: 03 6236 9236
E: catinc@carerstas.org

ARAFMI (Tas) Inc
T: 03 6331 4486 (Launceston)
T: 03 6228 7448 (Moonah)
www.arafmitas.org.au

VIC

Carers Victoria
www.carersvic.org.au
T: 03 9396 9500
F: 03 9396 9555
E: cav@carersvic.org.au

Mental Illness Fellowship Victoria
T: 03 8486 4200
www.mifellowship.org

WA

Carers WA
www.carerswa.asn.au
T: 08 9444 5922
F: 08 9444 8966
E: info@carerswa.asn.au

Mental Illness Fellowship of WA Inc
T: 08 9228 0200
www.mifwa.org.au

Family and carer supports and services continued...



Mental Illness Fellowship of Australia
08 8221 5072 www.mifa.org.au
Mental Illness Fellowship Nth Qld Inc
07 4725 3664 www.mifnq.org.au
Schizophrenia Fellowship of Qld Inc
07 3358 4424 www.sfq.org.au

Mental Illness Fellowship of
Sth Australia Inc
08 8221 5160 www.mifsa.org
Mental Health Carers NT
08 8948 1051
www.mentalhealthcarersnt.org

Mental Illness Fellowship Victoria
03 8486 4200 www.mifellowship.org
Schizophrenia Fellowship of NSW Inc
02 9879 2600 www.sfnsw.org.au
Mental Illness Fellowship of the ACT Inc
02 6205 2021 www.mifact.org.au

Mental Illness Fellowship of WA Inc
08 9228 0200 www.mifwa.org.au
ARAFMI (Tas) Inc
Launceston 03 6331 4486
Moonah 03 6228 7448
www.arafmitas.org.au