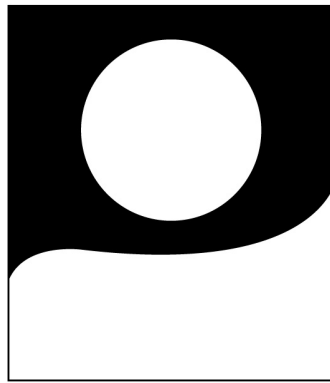


# Help? It's out there!



**mental health  
association  
nsw inc**

*Information booklet produced by the  
Mental Health Information Service*

## **O.K, so you think you (or someone you know) may be having a mental health problem - where to now?**

You may recognise that you are feeling depressed, constantly anxious, having obsessive thoughts, experiencing delusions, or any of a wide range of things that lead you to wonder why you can't 'hold it together'. You may be finding life a bit too much to cope with or generally feeling overwhelmed by your responsibilities. It can often take a while to realise that you need help but once you do, you need to know where help is available. This fact sheet tells you where you can go, what you can do and has a list of some of the organisations that may be helpful.

### **Your Local GP**

One of your first options is to explain your symptoms and concerns to your local/family doctor. Some symptoms of mental illness can be caused by a physical illness or medications and it is important to eliminate physical causes first. A GP is able to refer you to a psychiatrist, psychologist or counsellor depending on your needs. A GP is also able to prescribe medication if they are familiar with the particular illness. It is usually appropriate to see a mental health professional for a more thorough assessment and they in turn are able to make medication and/or therapy recommendations depending on the type and course of your mental health problem. For the most common mental illnesses, depression and anxiety, some form of therapy such as cognitive-behavioural therapy or general counselling is often an essential adjunct to medication.

## **Community Health Centres**

Alternatively you can go to your local Community Health Centre (CHC) listed in the White Pages under Community. Most Community Health Centres have a mental health professional - a social worker, psychologist or counsellor who you can talk to about your symptoms and concerns. They may treat you within their team or refer you elsewhere for further assessment or treatment as appropriate.

## **Crisis/Mobile Teams**

*What do you do if the person experiencing signs of a mental illness refuses to seek help and/or is behaving in a disturbed way that prevents you from communicating the importance of seeing a doctor?*

If they are acting in a way that is potentially harmful towards themselves or others, you can call the crisis team at your local Community Health Centre. These teams are often available 24 hours. If your nearest CHC doesn't have one, ask for contact details for the nearest 24-hour service. Keep this 'after hours' phone number handy.

Talk to the mental health worker about the situation and tell them all the things you are concerned about. Examples might be that the person is feeling suicidal, talking in a paranoid way, or experiencing hallucinations. It may be that you recognise symptoms that have led to a breakdown before and you can see that these are becoming worse.

The crisis team is a mobile unit that is able to come out and make an assessment in the person's home, hospital

emergency department, or another suitable place. It is helpful if they have some history of the person or situation, so as soon as you think that someone may be beginning to experience symptoms of a mental illness, call the team and keep them updated regarding the person's progress. They will be able to tell you under what circumstances they will be able to come out. This is particularly important if the person is reluctant to seek help once the illness (depression, psychosis, mania, panic attacks, etc.) develops further.

### **Choosing a mental health professional - the difference between psychiatrists and psychologists**

Psychiatrists are medically trained doctors who specialise in the treatment of mental illness. Like GPs they can prescribe, administer and monitor medication.

Psychiatrists do not advertise so it is up to your GP to refer you to someone appropriate.

Psychologists are trained in human behaviour and use a range of therapies to treat patients. They provide services including assessment, psychological testing, and various types of psychotherapy and counselling.

### **Medicare rebate for psychologists**

A Medicare rebate is now available for up to 12 sessions per calendar year with a registered psychologist\* with a Medicare Provider Number. To obtain the rebate you must be referred by an appropriate medical practitioner, i.e. a GP, psychiatrist or paediatrician. The practitioner will ensure that you meet the eligibility requirements and develop a management plan for your condition.

The cost and rebate from Medicare can vary depending on the consultation length and fee charged. If the psychologist bulk bills there will be no extra cost. For further information about the rebate or to locate a psychologist in your area contact the Australian Psychological Society on 1800 333 497 [www.psychology.org.au](http://www.psychology.org.au).

\* Similar Medicare rebates also exist for mental health accredited social workers and occupational therapists.

### **Admission to Hospital**

If a person is considered by their doctor to be ill enough to require hospitalisation then they can admit themselves voluntarily or they may be taken by relatives, friends or the crisis team to a hospital and admitted as a voluntary or involuntary patient. It is sometimes necessary for the crisis team to enlist the help of the police or an ambulance if the person is unwilling to go to hospital.

If the person is taken to hospital against their will they will be assessed by a doctor within 12 hours. Admission procedures and the person's voluntary or involuntary status are set out in the NSW Mental Health Act. If they admitted as an involuntary patient they will be given a Statement of Rights. To find out more about Act and the procedures, patient rights, etc. you can contact the relevant hospital, the Mental Health Advocacy Service, Mental Health Review Tribunal or the Mental Health Information Service.

On discharge from hospital people should be provided with relevant help and advice in relation to services that can continue to support their rehabilitation and recovery.

**After Care Association of NSW** (02) 9810 7100

Mental health rehabilitation and accommodation support services.

[www.aftercare.com.au](http://www.aftercare.com.au)

**Alzheimer's Australia NSW** 1800 100 500

Support and education for people affected by dementia and their families and carers. Support groups, counselling, library, information service and education programs.

[www.alzheimers.org.au](http://www.alzheimers.org.au)

**Association of Relatives and Friends of the Mentally Ill (ARAFMI)** (02) 9332 0700 or 1800 655 198

Support and information for relatives and friends of people with a mental illness via telephone, newsletter and support groups in various locations in NSW.

[www.arafmi.org](http://www.arafmi.org)

**GROW NSW** (02) 9633 1800 or 1800 558 268

Mental health self-help/mutual support groups in various locations in NSW using Grow's 12 step program.

[www.grow.net.au](http://www.grow.net.au)

**Lifeline** 13 11 14

24 hour, 7 day counselling and support telephone service. Face to face counselling available in some areas.

[www.lifeline.org.au](http://www.lifeline.org.au)

**Club SPERANZA (Australian Mental Health Suicide Consumer Alliance Inc) (02) 9908 1233**

Support groups for people with problems associated with suicide and self-harm. Provides information, advocacy, education and training.

[www.clubsperanza.org](http://www.clubsperanza.org)

**Mental Health Information Service 1300 794 991**

A telephone information service with details of mental health services throughout NSW. We have a range of brochures and fact sheets on mental illness and issues surrounding mental health. Details of support group meetings for various groups (depression, anxiety, schizophrenia, etc) in NSW.

[www.mentalhealth.asn.au](http://www.mentalhealth.asn.au)

**Mental Health Advocacy Service (02) 9745 4277**

Advice and minor assistance in matters under the NSW Mental Health Act, Guardianship Act and Protected Estates Act.

[www.legalaid.nsw.gov.au](http://www.legalaid.nsw.gov.au)

**Mental Health Review Tribunal**

(02) 9816 5955 or 1800 815 511

An independent body that makes legally binding decisions about the detention of involuntary patients and people under Community Treatment.

[www.mhrt.nsw.gov.au](http://www.mhrt.nsw.gov.au)

**NSW Disability Discrimination Legal Centre**

(02) 9310 7722 or 1800 800 708

Community legal centre providing advice on disability discrimination complaints.

[www.ddlcnsw.org.au](http://www.ddlcnsw.org.au)

**Schizophrenia Fellowship of NSW Inc.** (02) 9879 2600  
Supports people with schizophrenia and other mental illnesses, their family and friends. Telephone information and referral service, library, support groups, newsletter, education, and social activities.  
[www.sfnsw.org.au](http://www.sfnsw.org.au)

**Disclaimer**

*This information is for educational purposes. As neither brochures nor websites can diagnose people it is always important to obtain professional advice and/or help when needed. The listed websites provide additional information, but should not be taken as an endorsement or recommendation.*

*This information may be reproduced with an acknowledgement to the Mental Health Association NSW. This and other fact sheets are available for download from [www.mentalhealth.asn.au](http://www.mentalhealth.asn.au). The Association encourages feedback and welcomes comments about the information provided.*

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