

## Useful contacts

### Western Respite Service (MIND)

9391 0144

### Bouverie Centre

9385 5100

### Mental Illness Fellowship

8486 4200

### ARAFEMI

9810 9314

### Carer Counselling and Advisory Service

1800 242 636

### Southwest Area Mental Health Service

Werribee Mercy Mental Health Service  
1300 657 259

### Midwest Mental Health Service

Harvester Clinic  
1300 859 764

### Innerwest Area Mental Health Service

Waratah Adult Mental Health Service  
1300 304 407

### ORYGEN Youth Health

1800 888 320 – Triage

## Carers Victoria Respite Connections

Supporting family carers living in the local government areas of Brimbank, Hobsons Bay, Hume, Maribyrnong, Melbourne, Melton, Moonee Valley and Wyndham.

We are funded by both the Victorian and Australian governments to offer a range of specialist programs including: Aged, Disability, Mental Health, Carers @ Work and Young Carers.

## To find out more please call (03) 9396 9550

Carers Victoria Respite Connections  
Level 1, 37 Albert Street (PO Box 2204)  
Footscray 3011

TEL (03) 9396 9550  
FAX (03) 9396 9555  
TTY (03) 9396 9587  
EMAIL [rc@carersvic.org.au](mailto:rc@carersvic.org.au)  
[www.carersvic.org.au](http://www.carersvic.org.au)

Do you need an interpreter?

Call 131 450 (local call costs apply)

## How to find us



Melway map 42 C5

## Caring for someone with a mental illness?



Supporting family carers  
in Melbourne's West

  
**Carers**<sup>VIC</sup>  
AUSTRALIA

**Respite**  
Connections

## What is mental illness?

People with mental illness can experience problems in the way they think, feel or behave. In other words, their thinking, feeling and behaviour is all mixed up. This significantly interferes with their relationships, their work and enjoyment of life.

Having a mental illness can be difficult for the person and difficult for the family and other carers. It is not something to be ashamed of.

## How can we assist you?

Providing unpaid care for a family member or friend with a mental illness is important and identifies you as a carer. Carers come from all walks of life and can be of any age. There are services specifically for young carers (under 25) available.

If you are caring for someone with a mental illness, your own health and wellbeing is also very important. Having a break or taking some time to relax can benefit both you and the person you are caring for. This is often called respite.

## The Mental Health Program

The Mental Health Team aims to support and raise the profile of carers and families of people with a mental illness.

We can offer support in both times of crisis, and when planning for the future.

With an understanding of both carer issues and local mental health and community services, we can assist with information, advocacy and referral.

### The Mental Health Program works at:

- Providing carers with short term individual support.
- Assisting carers to access appropriate services.
- Informing carers of their rights and responsibilities.
- Assisting carers to access respite options.
- Introducing carers to carer support groups and functions.
- Supporting and resourcing carer support groups.
- Raising the profile of carers within the psychiatric services stream.
- Advocating for carers and carer issues.
- Identifying gaps in our service systems for carers and developing strategies to address these issues.

## A checklist of behaviours which may mean someone has a mental illness

People may:

- Withdraw completely from family, friends and workmates.
- Be afraid to leave the house (particularly in daylight).
- Sleep or eat poorly. Sleep by day and stay awake at night, pacing around.
- Believe they are being harmed, or influenced to do things against their will by television, radio, aliens or the devil, for example.
- Be extremely occupied with a particular theme, eg death, politics or religion.
- Uncharacteristically neglect household or parental responsibilities or personal hygiene and appearance.
- Deteriorate in performance at school or work, leave jobs.
- Believe, without reason, that others are plotting against, spying on or following them and have extreme fear of, or anger at those people.
- Have difficulty concentrating, following conversations or remembering things.
- Talk or write about things which do not make sense, panic, be extremely anxious, markedly depressed or suicidal.
- Lose variation in mood - be flat. Lack emotional expression, for example, humour or friendliness.
- Have marked changes in mood, for example from quiet to excited or agitated.
- Have inappropriate emotional responses, for example, giggling on hearing sad news.
- Hear voices that no one else can hear.
- Believe they have special powers, for example, that they are important religious leaders, politicians or scientists when this is not the case.
- Spend extravagant and unrealistic sums of money.