

# Nexus

Dual Diagnosis Consultation Service

## Carers Can Ask

A collaborative engagement tool  
for families, carers and clinicians

## Definition of Carer

Carers are people who provide support (in many different forms) to somebody who for reasons related to the persons physical, emotional, social and Mental Health (MH) circumstances needs supports at home or in the community they live in. The carers referred to herein this document are people who are supporting individuals with substance use and MH issues and the related health and social issues impacting on the person they are caring for. Carers are often family members, friends or people in the community who are in ongoing connected and meaningful care relationships.

## Purpose of Resource

To help you, as a carer, have an informed conversation with a service about treatment, discharge planning and post discharge support.

This resource provides questions that may help you (carer) to find out about treatment and discharge planning. Some of these questions can take time to answer due to the often complex nature of mental health and alcohol or other drug issues. The questions are suggestions only and not intended as an exhaustive or prescriptive list.

This resource is also useful to services to assist them to understand the information needs of carers and to encourage carer engagement in treatment and discharge planning.

## General Tips

It's in everyone's best interests for all parties to have clear, respectful lines of communication and good relationships. Effective engagement between carers and the various services involved in the care of the client can assist in achieving better treatment and discharge outcomes.

Questions should always be asked and responded to in a sensitive and respectful manner.

If you don't get the service you expect, you have the right to ask to speak with another person at the service or to make a complaint to the agency or the Mental Health Complaints Commissioner (for complaints about public sector mental health services) or Health Services Complaints Commissioner (for alcohol and drug services).

Resolving disputes at the local level is usually best for all concerned.

Providing feedback (positive or negative) to the service can assist that service to identify ways to provide the best care possible.

## Consider asking the following questions

### Consent/Information Sharing

- Has the person receiving care identified me as a carer?
- Are there any consent issues I need to be aware of?
- What are my rights if they don't provide consent?
- Have they been asked how they would like me to be involved?
- Have they agreed to sharing information with me?
- What information am I entitled to?
- How do I share information that I believe is relevant with the treating team?
- Will information I share with the treating team be shared with others? Who?



**I want to ask a question about...**

### Discharge Planning

- Have they been asked if they are ready to be discharged?
- Can I be included in the discharge planning?
- Can you explain why they are being discharged?
- Who has been involved in making the decision?
- Are both mental illness and drug and alcohol issues being addressed in an integrated manner?
- Has the person's culture and background been taken into consideration?

## Strengths Information

*"This model emphasises that people have strengths and an inherent capacity to learn, grow and change even when they present with vulnerabilities. Their strengths are in their passions, in their skills, in their interests, their relationships and their environments. The focus of the relationship between the mental health clinician and the consumer is on personal goals based on these strengths and finding niches in the community where these strengths can be used and valued. Through this, consumers develop their skills and a greater sense of hope and control."*

(Source P.5 St Vincent's Hospital Melbourne publication: Adult Mental Health Information for Consumers, Families and Carers)

## Strengths

- Can we talk about their strengths? I'd like to support them.
- What decisions and choices have they made about their illness?
- Can we talk about how they're understanding and feeling about the experiences that have led them to being in this situation?
- What goals have they been pursuing through this service?

## Discharge Summary

- Is it possible to receive a draft of the discharge plan prior to discharge so I can have further input if need be?
- Is there a written discharge summary?
- Who will receive it? Eg. GP, other services?
- Will I get a copy?
- Does everyone know what they need to do next?

## Carer's Role in Discharge

- Am I part of the discharge plan?
- What am I expected to do? (eg medication, relapse, transport, making appointments etc)
- Can we talk about it?

- Have they agreed to me doing those things?
- What happens if I can't do those things?
- Can I have help to support them? What sort of help can I get?

## Relapse

- How will I know if they are relapsing?
- What might the early warning signs be?
- Do they know what they are?
- What do I do if I notice these early warning signs?
- Who should I contact?
- Is there a written relapse plan?
- Have they made a written plan about what they want to happen if they become unwell? (e.g. advance statements)

## Treatment

- How can I be involved in treatment planning?
- Can you explain the diagnosis and prognosis?
- How might the treatment they are receiving affect their behaviour?
- Has an assessment of the interaction between their substance use and their mental health (dual diagnosis assessment) been done?
- What treatment have they received for both their substance use and their mental health issues? How does it work?
- How do we know if the treatment is working?
- Have they agreed to the treatment plan?
- Is this treatment compulsory? If yes, what is the process and review date?
- Will treatment be in the public or private system? How much will it cost? I.e. Medications, services etc

## Medications

- Can you explain how the medication works, any side effects and any interactions it may have with alcohol or other drugs?
- What should I do if they seem to be having a bad reaction?
- What should I do if they don't take their medication?
- Is there a record of what medications have been tried? Has this been shared to avoid any mistakes?
- Is there a record of his/her reactions to past medications?

## Physical Health

- Are there any physical health issues needing to be addressed?
- Has an ECG (heart monitor) been completed?
- Have there been blood tests undertaken to check physical health issues (also known as 'metabolic screening')?
- Is a brain MRI required?
- How, if at all, will the treatment impact on their physical health?
- Do you have any recommendations/suggestions for me as a carer as to how I can support this persons physical health?

## Referrals

- Who have you made referrals to?
- Have they been accepted?
- How long will the referral last?
- Do they need to go to a GP for another referral?
- Does everyone know what they are meant to be doing - is there a shared plan between all services referred to?
- Have they agreed to this?
- Have they met the new clinician/ GP/support worker?
- Can you tell me about the services you have referred them to?

- Do I need to do anything to support this referral?
- How do I provide support?
- What happens if they don't go?

## **Carer Supports**

- Who can I contact if I need help myself?
- Who do I contact if things go wrong?
- What sort of support can I have?  
(eg respite, counselling, peer support, advocacy)
- Do I need a referral?
- Am I able to speak with a carer consultant/peer worker?
- Am I able to access any financial support?

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about...**

## **Re: Accessing the Service**

- Can they use this service again?
- When?
- Who do we contact?
- What is the process if they need to come back?
- How will they access treatment after being discharged?

## **Relevant Emergency Contacts**

- Can you give me emergency contact numbers for my area?
- How do I know which one to call?
- When is it the right time to call?
- What do I do if we are not at home in an emergency?

## After Discharge

- If they don't follow the plan, what will you do?
- Will I be able to contact you or ask for advice after they're discharged?
- If not you, who or what service should I speak with?
- What psychosocial supports are available? e.g. education, employment, recreation, community managed mental health services, housing, legal, financial, National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) etc.

## Risk

- Have they been educated about possible risk issues? Eg. mental health and substance use, housing, legal etc
- Is there a risk of them overdosing?
- What is the likelihood that their mental health condition will relapse?
- What is the likelihood that they will relapse in relation to alcohol or other drug use?
- Has a risk assessment been recently completed? What were the results?
- What self harm or suicide risk exists?
- Who can I contact if I feel I can't manage the risk issues?

## Anything Else?

- Is there anything else I need to know?
- Can you tell me where to get more information about the illness?
- How else can I help once they leave here?
- Where can I find out more?



# Other Resources that Might Help

**Privacy, Confidentiality & Information Sharing – Consumers, Carers & Clinicians: A position statement and issues paper** by the National Mental Health Consumer & Carer Forum 2011.

<https://nmhccf.org.au/Publications-info>

**Adversity to Advocacy: The lives and hopes of mental health carers** – Mental Health Council of Australia, Oct 2009.

<http://www.mhca.org.au/index.php/component/rsfiles/download?path=Publications/MHCA%20CEP%20webLR.pdf&Itemid=539>

**Communicating with carers and families: Information sharing for better outcomes (2007).**

<http://www.chiefpsychiatrist.health.wa.gov.au/publications/>

**Carers guide to information sharing with mental health clinicians: communicating for better outcomes (2007).**

<http://www.chiefpsychiatrist.health.wa.gov.au/publications>

**Carers Recognition Act 2012.**

<http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/about-the-department/documents-and-resources/policies,-guidelines-and-legislation/carers-recognition-act-2012>

**Working together with Families and Carers. Chief Psychiatrist Guideline**

<https://www2.health.vic.gov.au/about/key-staff/chief-psychiatrist/chief-psychiatrist-guidelines/working-together-with-families-and-carers>

**Mental Health Act 2014 - Advanced Statement Link:**

<https://www2.health.vic.gov.au/mental-health/practice-and-service-quality/mental-health-act-2014-handbook/recovery-and-supported-decision-making/advance-statements>

**Families where a Parent has a Mental Illness (FaPMI)** aims to “reduce the impact of parental mental illness on all family members through timely, coordinated, preventative and supportive action within adult mental health services.”

<https://www.bouverie.org.au/support-for-services/fapmi>

## Find a Hospital Mental Health Service:

<http://www.health.vic.gov.au/mentalhealth/services/index.htm>

**Austin Psychiatric Triage** info, assessment & referral 24/7

**Ph: 1300 859 789**

**Austin CAMHS** Child & Adolescent Mental Health Services  
Business hours/after hours call Psych. Triage

**Ph: 03 94963620**

**Northern Hospital Psychiatric Triage**

**Ph: 1300 874 243**

**St Vincent’s Hospital Psychiatric Triage**

**Ph: 1300 558 862**

## Find an Alcohol or Other Drug Service:

### **DIRECT LINE**

Statewide 24/7 alcohol & other drug counselling, info & referral

**Ph: 1800 888 236**

### **Headspace**

For young people aged 12 - 25 years

**Ph: 1800 650 890**

### **YoDDA (formerly YSAS Line)**

24 hour free helpline for young people

**Ph: 1800 458 685**

## Carer Helplines:

### **Mind Carer Helpline**

9am-5pm, Monday to Friday

**Ph: 1300 554 660**

### **Family Drug Help**

9am to 9pm Monday - Friday / [www.familydrughelp.com.au](http://www.familydrughelp.com.au)

**Ph: 1300 660 068**

## Who can I call?

## Find a Mental Health Support in the Community including information about the NDIS:

*Federal funding for Mental Health Community Support Services has mostly been rolled into the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) which is designed to provide support to people with a disability, including people with severe mental illness.*

The following numbers may be helpful when you are trying to find out about the NDIS:

**Neami National  
EACH  
ACSO**

**Ph: 1300 379 462  
Ph: 1300 785 358  
Ph: 1300 022 760 (rural areas)**

## Community based mental health supports by Local Government Area:

If you live in these areas call **Neami Intake Ph: 1300 379 462**

- Bayside
- Brimbank
- Frankston
- Glen Eira
- Hobsons Bay
- Hume
- Kingston
- Maribyrnong
- Melbourne
- Melton
- Moonee Valley
- Moreland
- Mornington Peninsula
- Port Phillip
- Stonnington
- Wyndham
- Yarra

If you live in these areas call **EACH Intake Ph: 1300 785 358**

- Banyule
- Boroondara
- Cardinia
- Casey
- Darebin
- Greater Dandenong
- Knox
- Manningham
- Maroondah
- Monash
- Nillumbik
- Whitehorse
- Whittlesea
- Yarra Ranges

If you live in a rural area call **ACSO 1300 022 760**

## **National Disability Insurance Scheme links:**

<https://www.ndis.gov.au/>

<http://www.tandemcarers.org.au/access-the-ndis.php>

## **Alcohol and/or Other Drug Intake**

Call **Odyssey ReGen on Ph: 1800 700 514** for alcohol and other drugs intake service if you live in the cities of:

- Banyule
- Darebin
- Melbourne
- Moonee Valley
- Moreland
- Nillumbik
- Whittlesea
- Yarra

Call **Turning Point on Ph: 1800 778 278** for alcohol and other drugs intake service if you live in the cities of:

- Boroondara
- Manningham
- Whitehorse
- Monash

For other queries, call **DIRECT LINE: 1800 888 236** for advice 24/7

## Carer Services/Supports

**Tandem** (Previously Victorian Mental Health Carers Network)  
<http://tandemcarers.org.au/>

**Ph: 8803 5555**

**Carers Victoria**  
<http://www.carersvictoria.org.au/advice>

**Carer Links North**  
<http://www.respitenorthandwest.org.au/services-and-support>

**Ph: 9495 2500**

**Austin Mental Health Carer Consultants**

**Ph: 9496 5000**

**St Vincent's Mental Health Carer Consultants**

**Ph: 9288 4141**

## Mental Health Act 2014

Link to Mental Health ACT 2014 resources:  
[www.health.vic.gov.au/mentalhealth/mhactreform/resources.htm](http://www.health.vic.gov.au/mentalhealth/mhactreform/resources.htm)

## Aboriginal Resources

**Victorian Aboriginal Health Service Family Counselling Services**

**Ph: 03 9403 3300      Fax: 03 9403 3333**

**Hours:** Monday-Thursday 9am - 5pm, Friday 9am - 4pm

**Address:** 238-250, Plenty Rd, Preston, Vic

Access to 5 beds at St Vincent's Mental Health Acute Inpatient Service

If calling after hours phone St Vincent's Hospital Psychiatric Triage - **Ph: 1300 558 862**

**Website:** [http://www.vahs.org.au/family\\_counselling.html](http://www.vahs.org.au/family_counselling.html)

## Multicultural Resources

Telephone Information Line 24 hrs, 7 days a week - recorded information about involuntary patients, community treatment orders, electroconvulsive therapy and the Mental Health Review Board:

English - 9679 9838

Croatian - 9679 9828

Mandarin - 96799837

Turkish - 9679 9835

Arabic - 9679 9825

Greek - 9679 9829

Serbian - 9679 9834

Vietnamese - 9679 9836

Cambodian - 9679 9826

Italian - 9679 9830

Somali - 9679 9832

Cantonese - 9679 9827

Macedonian - 9679 9831

Spanish - 9679 9833

### Telephone Interpreting Service 24hrs/7 days a week

**Ph: 131 450**

<http://www.mhima.org.au/resources-and-information/Translated-information/translated-mental-health-information-resources>

### Action on Disabilities in Ethnic Communities

**Ph: 9480 1666**

<http://www.adec.org.au>

### Switchboard Victoria - LGBTIQ+ Resource

Gay and Lesbian Switchboard Victoria provides a peer-driven support services for the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and gender divers, intersex, queer and asexual (LGBTIQ+) people, their families, allies and communities

**Melbourne Ph: 9663 2939**

**Regional Victoria Ph: 1800 184 527**

**Hours:** Mon - Thurs 6-10pm (Wed 2-10pm), Fri, Sat, Sun & public holidays 6-9pm

**Website:** <http://www.switchboard.org.au/>

## Development of this resource

This resource was developed by the Discharge Planning Sub Committee of the North East Dual Diagnosis Youth network (NEDDY). It was initially based on the following source: Discharge Planning for Adult Community Mental Health Services - Office of Chief Psychiatrist 2002. We then drafted the resource and consulted with carers and staff of mental health and drug and alcohol services. The questions are suggestions only and due to the number of people that provided input into the resource we make no claim to their originality. Thank you to all carers, staff and agencies (Neami National, Wellways, Nexus and YSAS) involved. We thank all who have contributed to this resource and hope it is of use to carers.

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 St Vincent's Hospital  
Level 1, Bolte Wing  
14 Nicholson St  
Fitzroy VIC 3065

 +61 3 9231 2083

 [nexus@svha.org.au](mailto:nexus@svha.org.au)

 [www.svhm.org.au/nexus](http://www.svhm.org.au/nexus)