

# Consumers Can Ask

A resource for consumers to assist discussion about treatment, discharge planning and post discharge support in mental health, community mental health services and alcohol and/or other drug services

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## **Acknowledgements**

Thank you to all consumers, carers, staff and agencies involved who have contributed to this resource. I hope it is of use to consumers.

**Referrals**

**Re Accessing the Service**

**Relevant Emergency Contacts**

**After Discharge**

**Risk**

**Anything Else**

**Brief Version:** (You can use this page to make notes when talking with services)

## **Consent/Information Sharing**

## **Discharge Planning & Summary**

## **Strengths**

## **Carer's Role in Discharge & Supports**

## **Relapse**

## **Treatment**

## **Medications**

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## Purpose of Resource

To help you (as a consumer) have a helpful conversation with a service about treatment, discharge planning and post discharge support.

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

The idea is to look through the resource and see if there are questions that will help you in your conversations with services.

## 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 you and the various services involved in your care is paramount

Questions should always be asked 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 the Health Complaints Commissioner (for complaints about public and private sector alcohol and/or other drug services). Resolving disputes at the local level is usually best for all concerned.

## Creative Commons

This resource is the follow up to Carers Can Ask. I consulted with consumers and staff of mental health, mental health community support and alcohol services and put those ideas and suggestions into this resource. The questions are suggestions only and due to the number of people that provided input into the resource I make no claim to their originality. Thank you to all consumers, carers, staff and agencies (Neami National, SHARC, Mental Illness Fellowship Victoria, Nexus, Victorian Transcultural Mental Health and YSAS) involved. Thank you to all who have contributed to this resource and I hope it is of use to consumers.

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## Find Self Help Resources

AA (Alcoholics Anonymous) **Ph: 1300 222 222** <http://www.aa.org.au/>

NA (Narcotics Anonymous) **Ph: 1300 652 820** <http://na.org.au/index.php?lang=en>

SHARC (Self Help Addiction Resource Centre) **Ph: 9573 1700**

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

ASSIST Self help Guidelines

[http://www.who.int/substance\\_abuse/publications/media\\_assist/en/](http://www.who.int/substance_abuse/publications/media_assist/en/)

Centre for Clinical Interventions:

<http://www.cci.health.wa.gov.au/resources/consumers.cfm>

YoDAA is Victoria's Youth Drug and Alcohol Advice service **Ph: 1800 458 685**

<http://yodaa.org.au/self-help-options>

SANE Australia; information on mental illness for consumers, their carers, families and others. **Ph: 1800 187 263** <https://www.sane.org/>

## Definitions

### Consumer

'Consumer' refers to people who have direct experience of mental illness or alcohol and/or other drug issues and have used or are currently using health services. Consumers are as diverse as the full range of people living in Australia. Consumers are of different genders, of various ages, from diverse cultural backgrounds, class positions and social circumstances, sexual orientations and health and illness conditions.

### Carer

Carers' are family members and friends or peers who support someone with either mental health or alcohol and/or other drug issues or both.

### Guide to Mental Health Terminology

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

\*MH – Mental Health

\*MHCSS—Mental Health Community Support Service

### Guide to Alcohol and Other Drugs Terminology

<http://www.adin.com.au/glossary>

\*AOD – Alcohol and/or Other Drugs

## Treatment

Consider asking these questions:

\*Do I need to do anything (Eg. De tox) before I can access the service?  
 \*What treatment models do you use?  
 \*How can I be involved in treatment planning?  
 \*Can you please explain the diagnosis and prognosis?  
 \*How might that make me behave? What sort of things should I look out for?  
 \*Has a dual diagnosis screen and assessment been done? What were the results?  
 \*What treatment have I received?  
 \*How do we know if the treatment is working?

\*Will I get treatment in the public or private system?

\*How much will it cost?

\*Are medication costs covered under PBS?

\*Have I met the new clinician/ GP/support worker?

\*Have I agreed to this plan?

\*Can you explain how the medication works?

\*Are there any side effects? How will it interact with alcohol or other drugs?

\*What should I do if I seem to be having a bad reaction?

\*What should I do if I don't take my medication?

\*Is there a record of what medications have been tried? Has this been shared to avoid any mistakes?

\*Is there a record of my reactions to past medications?

\*What will you do if I don't go to appointments?

\*Is this treatment compulsory?

\*Can you give me information on PAWS (Post Acute Withdrawal Syndrome)?

## 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: 1300 558 862

Website: [http://www.vahs.org.au/family\\_family\\_counselling.html](http://www.vahs.org.au/family_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	Croatian	Mandarin	Turkish
Arabic	Greek	Serbian	Vietnamese
Cambodian	Italian	Somali	
Cantonese	Macedonian	Spanish	

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](http://www.mhima.org.au/resources-and-information/Translated-information/)

Action on Disabilities in Ethnic Communities Ph: 9480 1666 <http://www.adec.org.au>

## **Links: Alcohol and/or Other Drugs, Public Mental Health and Mental Health Community Support Services**

For information on AOD Services

<https://www2.health.vic.gov.au/alcohol-and-drugs/aod-treatment-services>

For information on public mental health services:

<https://www2.health.vic.gov.au/mental-health/mental-health-services/services-by-type>

For information on community managed mental health services:

<https://www2.health.vic.gov.au/mental-health/mental-health-services/services-by-type/mental-health-community-support-services>

## **Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender Intersex Resource**

Gay and Lesbian Switchboard

Volunteer organisation provides a free, confidential, anonymous general telephone counselling, referral and information service for Victorian and Tasmanian gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) community and its supporters

Hours: Mon - Thurs 6-10pm (Wed 2-10pm)

Fri, Sat, Sun & public hols 6-9pm

Melbourne: 9663 2939

Regional Victoria: 1800 184 527

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

## **Rules at Treatment Services**

Consider asking these questions:

\*What are the rules of the service?

\*Will I be allowed visitors?

\*Can I have my mobile phone with me?

\*Is it lock in? Are you allowed to leave when you want to?

\*Can I drink alcohol/continue to take my drug of choice with a view to reducing/stopping?

\*Do I need to stop taking all drugs even though I only want to work on giving up one? Eg. Give up alcohol but keep smoking cannabis

\*Will I have internet access?

\*What personal products can I bring such as shampoo, mouthwash etc

\*What is the policy in relation to me bringing in electrical devices? Can I listen to my own music?

\*Can I bring cigarettes with me? Do you provide nicotine replacement?

\*Can I wear makeup?

\*Are there any restrictions on the types of clothing I can wear?

\*Can I have my wallet with me?

\*Will I be expected to share a room?

\*What age do I need to be?

\*Is the service co-ed (male/female/other)?

\*Can you leave the premises?

\*What food will be made available? Can I buy food?

\*Will there be pay TV?

\*How will my safety be guaranteed?

\*What amenities will be there? Eg, gym, access to smoking area

\*Under what circumstances would I be asked to leave?

## Consent/Information Sharing

Consider asking these questions:

\*What information am I entitled to?

\*Are there any consent issues I need to be aware of?

\*How do I share information that I believe is relevant with the treating team?

\*How will information about me be shared?

\*Have you identified my carer?

\*Has my carer been asked how he/she would like to be involved?

## Communication of Information

Consider asking these questions:

\*How will you assess the best way for me to receive information?

\*How will you communicate information to me Eg. Through conversation, video, written material, websites, testimonials etc.

\*Are there any 'apps' or social media that you use?

## Find a Carer Helpline:

Mind Carer Helpline **Ph: 1300 550 265** (9am-5pm, Monday to Friday)

Family Drug Help **Ph: 1300 660 068** (9am to 9pm Monday - Friday)  
<http://www.familydrughelp.com.au>

## Carer Supports

\*Tandem (Previously called: Victorian Mental Health Carers Network)

<http://tandemcarers.org.au/> **Ph: 8803 5555**

\*Carers Victoria <http://www.carersvictoria.org.au/advice> **Ph: 1800 242 636**

\*Victorian Mental Illness Awareness Council (VMIAc)

<http://www.vmiac.org.au/about.php> **Ph: 9380 3900**

\*Carer Links North **Ph: 9495 2500**

<http://www.respitenorthandwest.org.au/services-and-support>

\*Austin Mental Health Carer Consultants **Ph: 9496 5000**

\*St Vincent's Mental Health Carer Consultants **Ph: 9288 4141**

\*Link to Mental Health ACT 2014 resources:

<http://www.health.vic.gov.au/mentalhealth/mhactreform/resources.htm>



## Find an Alcohol and/or Other Drugs Service

DIRECT Line (Statewide alcohol and other drug counselling, information and referral) 24hrs/7days **Ph: 1800 888 236** <http://www.directline.org.au/service-finder>

YoDDA (formerly YSAS Line) (24 hour free helpline for young people)

**Ph:1800 458 685** <http://yodaa.org.au/>

Call Odyssey ReGen on **Ph: 1800 700 514**

for alcohol and other drugs intake service if you live in these areas :

Banyule

Darebin

Melbourne

Moonee Valley

Moreland

Nillumbik

Whittlesea

Yarra

For other areas please call

DIRECT LINE **Ph: 1800 888 236**

## Staff

Consider asking these questions:

\*How is the service staffed?

\*What are the credentials of the staff working here? Eg. Counsellors? Other staff? What are their skills? Have they been through recovery? Credibility with treatment model?

\*Are there staff with lived experience working here?

\*How many staff will be there at any one time?

\*What is the staff to client ratio?

\*What are the staffed hours?

## Daily Activities

Consider asking these questions:

\*Will I be taught life skills? Eg. Chores, washing, time management, cooking, shopping, routines, hygiene, budgeting etc If your service doesn't teach these can you refer me to one that does?

\*What activities will be offered? Are they mandatory or can you choose?

## Medications

Consider asking these questions:

\*Can you explain how the medication works, any side effects and any interactions it may have with alcohol or other legal or illegal drugs?

\*What should I do if I have a bad reaction?

\*What should I do if I forget to take my medication?

\*Is there a record of what medications have been tried? Has this been shared to avoid any mistakes?

\*Is there a record of my reactions to past medications?

\*How often will my medications be reviewed?

\*Am I on the lowest possible effective dose?

\*Are there any alternative medications that might be suitable?

\*Can I tell you about things that have changed since being prescribed that may affect how the medication works, E.g. stopped/started/increased/decreased smoking, taking herbal supplements, etc.?

\*Are there other ways/times of taking the medication that might be more effective?

\*What treatments are available to manage side effects, e.g. medications, behavioural strategies such as exercise, diet, meditation, relaxation, self-help/support groups, etc.?

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## Find a Mental Health Community Support Service

Formerly called PDRSS, MHCSS support people with psychiatric disability to manage their self-care, improve social and relationship skills and achieve broader quality of life via physical health, social connectedness, housing, education and employment. To find your nearest intake assessment service for Mental Health Community Support Services in Victoria please see below:

Call Neami Intake Ph: 1300 379 462	If you live in these areas
Bayside	
Brimbank	
Frankston	
Glen Eira	
Hobsons Bay	
Hume	
Kingsston	
Maribyrnong	
Melbourne	
Melton	
Moonee Valley	
Moreland	
Mornington Peninsula	
Port Phillip	Varra Ranges
Stonnington	Whittlesea
Wyndham	Whitehorse
Varra	Nilumbik
	Monash
	Marondah
	Manningham
	Knox
	Greater Dandenong
	Darbin
	Casey
	Cardinia
	Boroondara
	Banyule
	If you live in these areas
Call EACH Intake Ph: 1300 785 358	
If you live in a rural area call ACSO Ph: 1300 022 760	

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## Resources

Dual Diagnosis Resources: <http://www.dualdiagnosis.org.au/>

Cannabis resources: <http://ncpic.org.au/>

Quit: <http://www.quit.org.au/> Ph: 137848

Australian Drug Foundation: <http://www.druginfo.adf.org.au/>

Treatment questions checklist.

<http://www.rcpsych.ac.uk/about/campaigns/partnersincarecampaign/checklistforcarers.aspx>

## Find a Hospital Mental Health Service:

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

St Vincent's Hospital Psychiatric Triage **Ph: 1300 558 862**

Austin Psychiatric Triage (information, assessment and referral 24 hours a day, 7 days a week) **Ph: 1300 859 789**

Austin CAMHS (Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services) **Ph: 03 9496 3620**  
(business hours/after hours call Psych. Triage)

Northern Hospital Psychiatric Triage Ph: 1300 874 243

## Consumer Supports

Consider asking these questions:

\*Who can I contact if I need help?

\*Who do I contact if things go wrong?

\*What sort of support can I have?

\*Do I need a referral?

\*Do you have peer workers? Eg. Consumer consultants

## Involving Carers in My Treatment

Consider asking these questions:

\*What is the service's philosophy about involving carers?

\*Can you explain to my carer what to expect from this service?

\*What sort of support can my carer get to support me?

\*How will my carer be involved in my treatment?

\*What if I don't want my carer involved in my treatment?

\*Can you explain addiction and mental health to my carer?

## Culture

Consider asking these questions:

\*What is the service's philosophy about culturally sensitive practice?

\*How do you work with people who don't speak English?

\*What links does your service have with culturally specific services?

## Strengths

Consider asking these questions:

\*Can we talk about my strengths? I'd like to build on them.

\*What decisions and choices do you think I've made about my illness?

\*How much insight do you think I have in relation to my illness?

\*What goals do you think I have been pursuing through this service?

\*What goals have you been pursuing in relation to my treatment?

## 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 find-

ing 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 con-

trol." (Source P.5 St Vincent's Hospital Melbourne publication: Adult Mental Health

Information for Consumers, Families and Carers)

## After Discharge

Consider asking these questions:

\*If I don't follow the plan, what will you do?

\*Will I be able to contact you or ask for advice after I'm discharged?

\*If not you, who or what service should I speak with?

\*Is there a day program post discharge?

\*Are there groups you can recommend?

## Relevant Emergency Contacts

Consider asking these questions:

\*Can you please 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 I am not at home in an emergency?

**In the case of emergency please call 000**

## Anything Else?

Consider asking these questions:

\*Is there anything else I need to know?

\*Can you tell me where to get more information about my illness?

\*How else can I help myself once I leave here?

\*Where can I find out more?

\*What self help resources are available? (see page 24 for self help resources)

## **Referrals**

Consider asking these questions:

- \*Who have you made referrals to?
- \*Have they been accepted?
- \*How long will the referral last?
- \*Do I need to go to a GP/other service for another referral?
- \*Does everyone know what they are meant to be doing?
- \*Have I agreed to this?
- \*Can you tell me about the services you have referred me to?
- \*What do I need to do to follow up these referrals?
- \*What support can you give me to attend appointments?
- \*How can my family/friend/carer support me with these referrals?
- \*What happens if I don't go?

## **Re – accessing the Service**

Consider asking these questions:

- \*Can I use this service again?
- \*When and under what circumstances?
- \*What is the process if I need to come back?
- \*Who do I contact?
- \*How will I access treatment after being discharged?

## **Relapse**

Consider asking these questions:

- \*How will I know if I am relapsing?
- \*What might the early warning signs be?
- \*What effect does alcohol or other drug use have on the possibility of relapse?
- \*What do I do if I see any of these effects?
- \*Who should I contact?
- \*Is there a written relapse plan?
- \*Can I make a written plan about what I want to happen if I become unwell? (Eg. advance directives)
- \*Can you talk with my carer about relapse so they know what to look out for and how to respond?

## Discharge Planning

Consider asking these questions:

- \*How will I be included in the discharge planning?
- \*Can you please explain why I'm 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 my culture and background been taken into consideration?

## Discharge Summary

Consider asking these questions:

- \*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, my carer?
- \*Will I get a final copy?
- \*Does everyone know what they need to do next?

## Consumer Role in Discharge

Consider asking these questions:

- \*Am I part of the discharge plan?
- \*What am I expected to do? (eg medication, relapse plan, transport, making appointments etc)
- \*Can we talk about it?
- \*What happens if I can't or don't do those things?
- \*What role will my carer be expected to play?
- \*Can my carer have help in supporting me? What sort of help can they get?

## Risk

Consider asking these questions:

- \*Have you educated me about possible risk issues?
- \*Is there a risk of me overdosing?
- \*What is the likelihood that my mental health condition will relapse?
- \*What is the likelihood that I 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 my risk issues?