



Mental Illness

One in five Aboriginal people will suffer mental illness in their adult life. Mental illness can affect all the family members because looking after someone with a mental illness can sometimes be stressful. Mental illness includes: Depression, which can sometimes happen after or before the birth of a baby. Depression can also be caused by traumatic events like domestic violence. Or it can be triggered by other stressful life events such as family break up or the death of a family member.

Some drugs can also trigger severe depression.

Other mental illnesses include Schizophrenia, which means the person is not living in reality. Schizophrenia can vary. Some people can see or hear things that aren't there. Sometimes people become very paranoid or anxious about things. Some Schizophrenia can be triggered by drug abuse.

Another mental illness is Bi Polar Disorder or Manic Depression. This is when the person becomes very manic or over active and cannot sleep and then may become exhausted and then very depressed and even suicidal.

If you have a relative with a mental illness, you can get help from:

- *Your local Doctor.*
- *Your local Hospital.*
- *Your Local Community Health Centre.*
- *Your Local Aboriginal Medical Service.*

Schizophrenia Fellowship Carers Support Unit

They can help you with information, support and advocacy. This service is for carers of anyone with a mental illness. Not just Schizophrenia. Advocacy means helping you to get the assistance of help you need. The service can also talk with you about any problems you are worried about and help take stress off you when you don't know what to do or can't get the help you need. **Ring 02 9870 2600 (9am - 5pm)**

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The Mental Health Advocacy Service (MHAS)

MHAS is part of Legal Aid NSW. For people who want legal help or advice about mental health matters. Ring **02 9745 4277** for further information.

ARAFMI

You can also get help and information through ARAFMI - which stands for Association for Relatives And Friends of people with Mental Illness.

They have groups you can go to get support and advice.

Ring **02 9887 5897** or **1800 655 198** to find out the closest group to you.

NSW Association for Mental Health

This service has information about all the mental health services in NSW. It can also tell you about Support Groups for the person you care for and yourself.

It can send you out information about the illness and answer any questions you have about mental illness. Ring **1800 674 200** or **02 9816 5688**

Compeer

This is a Volunteer Service run by St Vincent De Paul. It aims to link the person with the mental illness up with someone who can be a friend to them. You will need a referral from a doctor to this service. Phone **02 9560 8666** to find out more.

Many Aboriginal Carers say that they don't know what services can help them or that they feel awkward about talking to someone about the situation.

The **Commonwealth Carer Resource Centre** on **1800 242 636*** is there to help you and anything that you say is treated confidentially. It remains private between you and the person you talk with.

**1800 242 636 Free call except from mobile phones. Mobile calls at mobile rates.*