

## FACT SHEET

# IN THIS TOGETHER: FAMILIES AND CARERS CAN ASK YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH AND MULTICULTURAL FAMILIES

FOR  
FAMILY  
AND  
CARERS

### INTRODUCTION FOR FAMILIES AND CARERS

Young people face a range of challenges through adolescence and into adulthood, but not all young people will need mental health support.

For the families and carers of young people who do need mental health support, interacting with professionals and services at a time of extra challenges and stress can be worrying and confusing.

This simple fact sheet is intended to help services and families work together for the benefit of young people, family and carers.

It is divided into general topic sections for easier navigation.

The fact sheet is based on what other families and carers wish they had known, or had asked, when they were looking for ways to support a young person experiencing mental health difficulties. Suggestions are not exhaustive but are based on a range of commonly asked questions.



You can make this resource your own by:

- adding your own questions;
- bringing it with you when meeting with a worker or visiting a service;
- highlighting any questions that are particularly important to you, or you feel haven't been covered in sessions so far; and
- translating this resource into your first language. To find out more, see the Victorian Department of Health's information on language services for mental health.(1)





## SUPPORTING A YOUNG PERSON

You might wonder how best to support a young person to engage with a mental health service and what can contribute to the best outcomes. You can ask:

- How can I best support the young person?
- How can we all work together to support the young person?



## MENTAL HEALTH SYSTEM

You may need an introduction to the mental health service system in order to best support the young person you care for and make it easier for them to engage with the system. You can ask:

- How does the mental health system work for young people and their families?
- What happens after an initial call to a service?
- Who can I talk to if I have questions about the mental health system?
- What might happen while the young person I care for is getting mental health support?
- Who might be involved in the young person's mental health support?
- What are my rights as a family member or carer?
- Will it impact the young person's treatment if I assert my rights?
- Do I have to provide personal information? If so, how will this be used and stored?

You might have other questions on this topic. You can add them here:

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## THIS SERVICE

Each mental health service has its own way of operating and it can be confusing to work out how any single service works. To get a better understanding, you can ask:

- How does this service work?
- What are the values of the service?
- Who funds this service?
- What will the service cost us?
- What funding support exists for us?
- What training and experience do the staff have?
- Will the staff understand my point of view as well as that of the young person I care for?
- Who can attend the session/s?
- How do I get to the service (for example, public transport, parking, etc.)?
- Is anyone from my cultural background? Does anyone speak my language and dialect?
- How can I access someone who is from my culture and/or speaks my language?
- How can we get support if we need it when the service is closed?
- What are the waiting times for this service?
- Is it okay to contact the young person's care team? If so, how do I do this?
- What language help or translation help will there be if I need to speak to the team?

You might have other questions on this topic. You can add them here:

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## WORKING TOGETHER: THE YOUNG PERSON, MYSELF AND SERVICES

To get a better understanding of how everyone works together, you can ask:

- How will I be included in the young person’s professional care?
- How does this service support other people in our family during this time?
- Who can I talk to if I have concerns, questions or information to share?
- Can I speak with a worker confidentially if there are personal things I could share that might help the service support the young person?
- What can I do if I am not happy with the worker?
- How can an interpreter be used?  
How can I let a worker know my preference?
- How do I let a worker know if I am/am not happy with the interpreter’s service?
- What if the interpreter is from my community and I have concerns that they may not keep my information confidential?
- Can I ask for a change of interpreter or ask to have the same interpreter?
- Who pays for the interpreter?

**You might have other questions on this topic. You can add them here:**

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## MENTAL HEALTH: TOPIC INFORMATION

**Asking questions about mental health can help you understand what’s going on for the young person you care for. You can ask:**

- What does this service mean by ‘mental health’, ‘mental wellbeing’ and ‘mental illness’?
- Please explain what you think is happening for the young person. What might it mean for their future?
- What might happen when you work with the young person?
- What do I need to know about supporting the young person over time as you work with them?
- What does this medicine do? When and how often does the young person need to take it?

**You might have other questions on this topic. You can add them here:**

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## CULTURE AND OUR STORY

You can ask about your culture and how a mental healthcare service provides care that respects what's important to you and the young person you care for. Here are a few questions other families and carers have asked:

- What supports are there for us from our own cultural community?
- Can our general practitioner, community service, bicultural psychiatrist or other worker be part of the team?
- What might help build understanding between us, the young person, and services?
- How can we safely talk about aspects of our culture? How can I share important information with my worker about my own needs, or my family's needs, in relation to culturally respectful language, behaviour, beliefs or approach?
- Will I need to speak about traumatic or difficult family experiences? If so, how might this occur and can I do this without the young person I care for hearing?

You might have other questions on this topic. You can add them here:

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## SELF-CARE AND SUPPORT RESOURCES

Often families and carers naturally focus on the needs of the young person. It can be easy for you to forget your own needs for support.

**Stress is also tough for families and carers - it can make it harder for you to support the young person and each other. You can ask:**

- What services are there to support families and carers?
- How can I practice good self-care myself and help others to also self-care?
- I'm struggling. How do others cope?
- Is there anyone from my culture who has had this experience that I could connect with?



You might have other questions on this topic. You can add them here:

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## PRACTICAL QUESTIONS

**Some practical questions you can ask:**

- How does confidentiality work?
- What will be recorded? How is it recorded? Who has access?
- How will I be included in the young person's professional care?
- Do I need to explain the young person's needs to my family, friends, work colleagues or the young person's school? If so, how?

You might have other questions on this topic. You can add them here:

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## RELATED RESOURCES

Sites with a range of services listed:

Carers Australia. [Carer Gateway](https://carersaustralia.com.au/support-for-carers/carer-gateway/). (Australia wide) carersaustralia.com.au/support-for-carers/carer-gateway/

Victorian Department of Families, Fairness and Housing. [Young people support services](https://services.dffh.vic.gov.au/support-services). (Victoria) https://services.dffh.vic.gov.au/support-services

Mental health carer lead organisations and services:

[Tandem Carers](https://tandemcarers.org.au). (Victoria) tandemcarers.org.au

[The Bouverie Centre](https://bouverie.org.au). (Victoria) bouverie.org.au

[SANE Australia](https://sane.org). (Australia wide) sane.org

## REFERENCES

1. Language Services – when to use them; when to use an interpreter or translator; how to access the services. [State of Victoria 2017–2020; cited 2021 May 12]. Available from: <https://www2health.vic.gov.au/mental-health/mental-health-services/language-services-when-to-use-them>
2. Carers can ask – a collaborative engagement tool for families, carers and clinicians. Nexus Dual Diagnosis Consultation Service, St. Vincent’s Hospital. Available from: [www.svhm.org.au/nexus](http://www.svhm.org.au/nexus) CCA Booklet final 8.8.19. pdf.aspx (svhm.org.au)

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This factsheet is designed as a prompt to assist with good communication. It is not an exhaustive list of questions that families may want to ask or a full guide to the way services may assist. Orygen encourages families and carers to discuss their needs with services and together build a plan if additional help is needed.

**Orygen acknowledges** the Traditional Owners of the lands we are on and pays respect to their Elders past and present. Orygen recognises and respects their cultural heritage, beliefs and relationships to Country, which continue to be important to First Nations people living today.

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