

Carer and support person guide



We recognise that you play a role in the life of a person that has become unwell. This guide provides some useful information to support you through the process of your relative or friend's admission and recovery phase at the St John of God Langmore Centre.

You are perfectly placed to help support and influence the recovery of your relative or friend experiencing mental health distress. You are often the only one around to support the relative or friend following discharge and by involving you, you can facilitate continuity of care, empowerment, connection and purpose in their life.

Recovery is "being able to create and live a meaningful and contributing life in a community of choice with or without the presence of mental health issues", National Framework for recovery-Orientated Mental Health Service, 2013.

Holding onto hope for families and friends can mean balancing the uncertainty of illness with the possibility of improvement and optimism about their future. At St John of God Langmore Centre we can help support and guide you through this process. If you have any questions about the information in this guide or your role as a carer or support person, please do discuss them with the clinical care team.

Who is a carer or support person?

A carer or support person can be anyone who offers support to an individual who needs help. This may be a wife or husband, partner, son, daughter, parent, neighbour or friend. A carer is usually identified by the patient as such, regardless of how many hours that person spends each week providing support and care.

A carer or support person may or may not live with the person, but actively invests time and support in an unpaid manner to assist with the person's daily needs or comes to visit regularly.

In culturally diverse communities a carer's role may be provided by a network of carers.

Identifying you as a carer or support person

We know that better patient outcomes, management and support during the recovery phase of mental health illness and addictions are enhanced when carers and support people are actively involved as 'partners in care'.

At St John of God Langmore Centre we are committed to involve carers and support people in our care of your relative or friend. There are a number of positive things you can do as a carer or support person to help recovery.

Upon admission, we ask our patients to identify their nominated carer or support person which is documented on their admission form. With patient consent, this enables you to be involved in partnering in their care while your relative or friend is undertaking treatment with us.

As the identified carer or support person you can:

- Ask questions to your relative or friend's clinical team
- Receive information about your relative or friend's treatment options and progress
- Receive information of your relative or friend's hospital routine and daily programs
- Visit your relative or friend while in hospital
- Be involved in your relative or friend's discharge and recovery planning processes
- Attend outpatient doctor appointments with your relative or friend.

At any time during a patient's hospital stay, they may choose to identify their carer or support person should they have not already done so upon admission. They may also choose at any time to stop the active involvement of their carer or support person. In those circumstances the clinical care team needs to respect the patient's wishes.

Culturally and linguistically diverse carers

We recognise that there may be specific needs for caring for a relative or friend from a culturally and linguistically diverse community.

We offer translation support services and can provide some information in other language formats.

We will make every effort to accommodate any important religious, cultural practices or customs that are important to our patients. Please discuss any specific needs you or your relative or friend may have with the caregiver team.

Is this your relative or friend's first hospital stay?

The first hospital stay for your relative or friend can be confronting for them and you as their carer or support person.

You may feel a range of emotions, these can include: sadness, guilt, worry or even relief that they are in a safe environment. These are all normal emotional responses. Most importantly, you should recognise that from time-to-time, a hospital stay is necessary when managing a mental health illness or addiction and is not a reflection of the good care and support that you provide your relative or friend.

Your relative or friend in our care

As a carer or support person you can be reassured that your relative or friend is receiving expert and professional care to meet their individual needs. We provide a safe environment with round-the-clock nursing care, continuously monitoring for signs of any deterioration of symptoms and put in place management plans to aid and support their recovery. We provide a tailor made range of inpatient treatment therapies/programs and a careful transition to outpatient services when your friend or relative is ready to return home.

We can also offer you some advice and guidance to help you better understand your relative or friend's illness, diagnosis and treatment options and what it means to be in recovery. This increased knowledge can be helpful to you when your relative or friend returns home. It aids in building on their strengths, empowering them to make positive choices and make the most of new opportunities.

Recovery works well in partnership with you providing support that is meaningful and realistic, and helps them to realise their own hopes, goals and aspirations.

Escorted leave

As part of discharge planning, the doctor may have a discussion with your relative or friend about taking some escorted leave from the hospital. This is based upon a mental health risk assessment and a discussion with the treating psychiatrist. Prior to taking escorted leave, your relative or friend must sign out at the nurse's station, telling us where they are going and agreeing on a return time. You, as the trusted person accompanying the person taking leave must receive information from

our caregivers to assist in supporting your relative or friend.

If at any time while you are escorting leave, you are concerned about your relative or friend you can call the unit they are staying in directly:

Brighton Unit:	(03) 9773 7080
Heatherton Unit:	(03) 9773 7100
Shepton Unit:	(03) 9773 7100
Wexford Unit:	(03) 9773 7070

Or if an emergency occurs and immediate assistance is needed call 000.

Caring for the carer

When you care for someone with a mental health illness, it is more important than ever to make sure that you are looking after yourself.

Caregiving and support can be emotionally and psychically draining. Many carers and support people find it difficult to focus on their own needs. While your relative or friend is in our care, do take the time to 'recharge your batteries' and to meet some of your own personal self-care needs.

Allow yourself the opportunity for 'me time', to catch up with the people or activities that are important to you. Take time to replenish your own reserves by having a good diet, some exercise and a proper sleep routine. No person can be a carer or a support person 24/7, it is important that you recognise your own personal limits, take breaks and consider sharing caring duties with another person(s).

It is also helpful to talk with someone who will listen in a non-judgemental way: friends, family, professional support, or join a carers' support group. Sharing your experiences can help you work through your own feelings and needs as a carer or support person. (Please refer to the index at the back of this guide for a list of professional support services available to you).

Determine the level of care that you can provide without compromising your own wellbeing. Ask to speak with our social worker if you feel you need a referral to external support agencies to help ensure continuity of care for your relative or friend after they are discharged.

Taking time to focus on yourself will help you feel better prepared to resume your supportive, caring role when they return home.



Ways we can assist carers and support people

We recognise carers and support people as an important partner in the care of a relative or friend. We encourage the carer and support person's involvement in goal setting and decision-making. Together with both the clinical team and the patient, decisions can be made on current and future care needs.

From the perspective of the individual with mental illness or addiction, recovery means gaining and retaining hope, understanding of one's abilities and disabilities, engagement in an active life, personal autonomy, social identity, meaning and purpose in life, as well as a positive sense of self.

Working together improves outcomes, reduces stress and anxiety and helps you remain supportive. You and your relative or friend have rights regarding the care provided at St John of God Langmore Centre. We invite you to familiarise yourself with these rights and seek clarification with the admissions team or nurse on anything you do not understand.

If you have any questions about any aspect of your relative or friend's care please ask to speak with the nurse in charge of your unit.

Ways carers and support people can assist us

We encourage nominated carers or support people to be actively involved in a relative or friend's recovery orientated treatment plan.

This plan is an important tool which is developed in consultation with your relative or friend in goal setting and actions to set them on a managed path to recovery. This plan will be regularly reviewed and updated.

We recognise that you know your relative or friend best and can be a vital part of this treatment and recovery planning process. If there are things that would be helpful for the clinical team to know please inform a nurse these could include certain behaviours, triggers, or habits and strategies that can assist in helping us care for your friend or relative.

If at any time you are concerned about your relative or friend while in our care you can activate an 'Escalation of Care' process by following the steps below:

Step 1 If you are worried:

Speak to your nurse or doctor at any time during the shift or during bedside handover about your concerns.

Step 2 If you are still worried:

Speak to the nurse unit manager in charge of

your ward.

(If out of business hours please speak to the nurse in charge of the ward).

Step 3 If you are still worried:

Ask to speak to the Director of Clinical Services. (If out of business hours, please speak to the after-hours coordinator).

Carers and support people have an important role in your relative or friend's discharge planning and recovery phase. We encourage you to be supportive and involved in this process and to ensure your relative or friend remains engaged in their recovery which also may include any specific outpatient services the clinical team recommends.

The discharge plan also outlines symptom management, relapse prevention, crisis management and promotes recovery. It is important to encourage opportunities for making choices to maintain a sense of control in everyday life, building on strengths and celebrating success. Supporting new community connections and strengthening networks can also be a significant way to promote recovery.

After discharge

It is important to develop a sense of balance between the effects of your relative or friend's illness or addiction and hopes in their recovery phase.

Encourage them to be actively involved in their own self-recovery management. Be mindful of striking a balance between doing things for them and encouraging some independence, but also taking care to be realistic about their progress and the time involved in this process.

Accept that symptoms can come and go and relapses can happen. It is also important to recognise that you cannot make your relative or friend behave in a certain way e.g. taking medication, abstaining from drugs or alcohol, or solve all of their problems.



After discharge checklist

- Identify a substitute carer or support person if you are unexpectedly unavailable or unwell.
- Have an up-to-date list of your relative or friend's medications.
- Have easy access to important phone numbers: for example GP, psychiatrist, hospital crisis team etc.
- Decide with your relative or friend what deteriorating behaviours or symptoms will alert you to seeking additional support.
- Make a plan of action in case of an emergency or crisis. (Please note that the patient will be given a multidisciplinary mental health recovery and discharge plan. This will include all relevant crisis information and phone numbers.)

Important numbers

Langmore Centre main reception: (03) 9773 7000

Brighton Unit: (03) 9773 7080

Heatherton Unit: (03) 9773 7100

Shepton Unit: (03) 9773 7100

Wexford Unit: (03) 9773 7070

How to give feedback or make a complaint

We encourage open communication with our patients, relatives and support people and aim to solve any issues or concerns promptly. If you wish to raise a matter with your relative or friend's healthcare team, please contact the nurse unit manager of the unit your friend or family member is staying in. If you are not satisfied with the outcome of your feedback, concern or complaint, you may wish to refer it to the complaints officer at St John of God Langmore Centre:

Complaints officer:
Director of Clinical Services P(03) 9773 7000

If you feel that your complaint has not been resolved, you may wish to access the Health Complaints Commissioner.

Health Complaints Commissioner 1300 582 113
Level 26, 570 Bourke Street Melbourne, VIC 3000
hcc.vic.gov.au.

Partners in care

St John of God Langmore Centre coordinates a Consumer Consultative Committee with representation from consumers and carers/support people. Its purpose is to engage with consumers and carers on the delivery of our services to ensure we can continue to make quality improvements.

Carers Victoria

Carers Victoria is the state-wide voice for carers providing support, guidance, education and resources for carers. Carers Victoria also provides specialist support services for young people up to the age of 25 to assist them to enjoy their lives and reach their potential. To become a member visit: carersvictoria.org.au or phone 1800 514 845.

Office of the Public Advocate

The Office of the Public Advocate provides advice and support should a patient want to apply for and appoint a substitute decision maker for medical treatment or an advanced care planning directive.

To access the forms visit: publicadvocate.vic.gov.au
Ph: 1300 309 337.

Victorian Government Carer Card Program

Carer card holders can benefit from the same discounts available to senior card holders. These discounts cover a range of goods and services including: eating out, shopping, leisure and recreation, or getting help with your finances. You can also apply for carer's concession fares and free weekend travel on public transport.

To apply online visit: carercard.vic.gov.au
Ph: 1800 901 958.

Carer and support person's rights

As a carer or support person you have the right to:

- Be recognised as a carer or support person
- Visit during visiting hours or as otherwise arranged
- Information:
 - Of a personal nature that can only be shared with the consent of your relative or friend
 - Of a general non-personal nature that can be shared and may include factual information to assist in better understanding mental illness and treatment
- Know how to contact us:
 - Ask questions
 - Have policies and practices explained
 - Ask for assistance to source support services
 - Be fully engaged in your relative or friend's care





Additional Resources

- **Al-Anon Family Groups Australia** 1300 ALANON (1300 252 666), al-anon.org.au
- **Alcohol and Drug Foundation** Drug Info & Advice Line 1300 85 85 84, adf.org.au
- **Alfred Health Carer Services** 1800 512 121, alfredhealthcarers.org.au
- **Anxiety Disorders Association of Victoria** (03) 9853 8089, adavic.org.au
- **Anxiety Recovery Centre Victoria** OCD & Anxiety Helpline 1300 269 438, (03) 9830 0533, arcvic.org.au
- **Beyond Blue** 1300 224 636, beyondblue.org.au, youthbeyondblue.com
- **Black Dog Institute** blackdoginstitute.org.au, clinic: (02) 9382 2991
- **Carer Gateway** 1800 422 737, carergateway.gov.au
- **Carers Victoria** 1800 514 845, carersvictoria.org.au
- **Children of Parents with a Mental Illness** copmi.net.au
- **Community Visitors Program** 1300 309 337, publicadvocate.vic.gov.au
- **Dementia Australia:** National Dementia Helpline 1800 100 500, dementia.org.au
- **DirectLine**, confidential alcohol and drug counselling and referral, 1800 888 236, directline.org.au
- **Family Drug and Gambling Helpline** 1300 660 068, sharc.org.au
- **Family Drug Support Australia** 1300 368 186, fds.org.au
- **Embrace Multicultural Mental Health** (02) 6285 3100, embracementalhealth.org.au
- **Gambler's Help** 1800 858 858, Gambler's Help Youthline: 1800 262 376, responsiblegambling.vic.gov.au
- **GROW** 1800 558 268, grow.org.au
- **Head to Health** headtohealth.gov.au
- **Ice Advice line** 1800 ICE ADVICE (1800 423 238)
- **Kids Helpline** 1800 551 800, kidshelpline.com.au
- **Lifeline Crisis Line** 13 11 14, lifeline.org.au
- **Lived Experience Australia:** livedexperienceaustralia.com.au
- **Mental Health Australia** mhaustralia.org
- **Mental Health Complaints Commissioner** 1800 246 054, mhcc.vic.gov.au
- **Mental Illness Fellowship Australia** 1800 985 944, mifa.org.au
- **Mind Australia Carer Helpline** 1300 554 660, mindaustralia.org.au
- **National Eating Disorders Collaboration Butterfly National Helpline:** 1800 33 4673, nedc.com.au
- **NEAMI National** (03) 8691 5300, neaminational.org.au
- **Orygen Youth Health Clinical program**, (03) 9966 9100, orygen.org.au
- **Parentline Victoria** 13 22 89
- **QLife** 1800 184 527, qlife.org.au
- **Relationships Australia** 1300 364 277, relationships.org.au
- **SANE Australia** 1800 187 263, sane.org
- **Tandem** 1800 314 325, tandemcarers.org.au
- **Victoria Legal Aid** 1300 792 387, legallaid.vic.gov.au
- **Victorian Mental Illness Awareness Council** (03) 9380 3900, vmiac.org.au
- **Wellways** 1300 111 400, wellways.org
- **WIRE Women's Support Line:** 1300 134 130, wire.org.au
- **1800RESPECT National Sexual Assault, Domestic Violence Counselling Service** 1800 737 732, 1800respect.org.au



Consumer reviewed and approved

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