

Am I a Young Carer?



**Mental Health
Carers NSW**

WHEN YOUR FAMILY MEMBER IS UNWELL OR NEEDS HELP, DO YOU DO ANY OF THE FOLLOWING?



Cooking, cleaning, washing, and household chores;



Personal tasks such as assisting with mobility, bathing, feeding and grooming;



Helping them with medication or appointments;



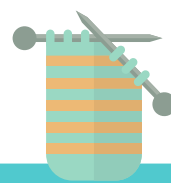
Checking on them to make sure they are okay (Young Carers NSW 2019)

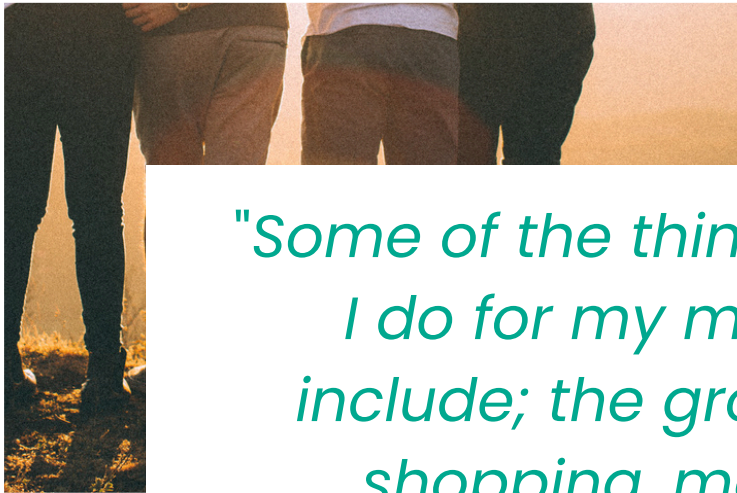


You might be a young carer!

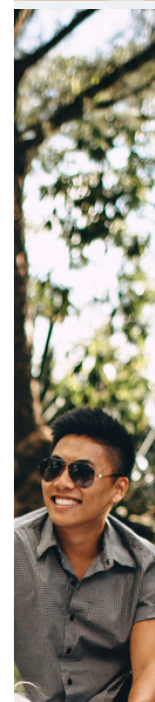
Young carers are **children and young people, aged 25 years or under**, who help to **support a family member or friend** who is **frail, living with a disability, mental illness, drug or alcohol dependency, chronic condition, or terminal illness**.

You might care for your mother, father, grandparent, brother, or sister.





*"Some of the things that
I do for my mum
include; the grocery
shopping, meal
preparation, doing day
to day household
chores - as well as
being an emotional
support for her."
- A young carer*



WORRIES & FEARS YOUNG CARERS MAY EXPERIENCE

Caring for someone is not always easy, but you are not alone. As a young carer, you should be supported through the any additional difficulties you encounter. It is normal to feel worried or scared. Being a young carer can be very demanding, and you might find it hard to do anything for yourself (Carers ACT 2017).

Remember:



Feeling overwhelmed sometimes is normal;



You are still important – try to take time to look after yourself;



Remember there are people you can talk to for support, and most importantly, there are other young carers out there who have had similar experiences to you;



Don't put yourself down. It's hard to manage school or socialising with friends when you have extra responsibilities, you are doing the best you can (Carers ACT 2017);



You may feel embarrassed about what your friends might think, but true friends will understand and want to help;



Don't keep it all to yourself. Instead of bottling it up, talk to someone you trust;



You don't have to share everything all at once. Sometimes it is hard to work out if you should tell your friends, and how much information you should share. You might discover that you have more in common than you think (Carers ACT 2017).





WHAT SHOULD I EXPECT?

From mental health services, you can expect to:

- Be heard, listened to, believed and respected;
- Be spoken to and included in discussions regarding the person you care for (if the person agrees) and be informed when they are being discharged from hospital or a mental health unit;
- Be advised about where to get support with your caring role;



HELP!

You also have the right to exit your caring role. However, this is not always possible. This is where reaching out to services can help.

As a carer, you can also expect to:

- Receive a time out or break from your caring role. This can include someone looking after the person you care for so you can relax, go out and attend group outings, fun activities, camps, or individual support and holiday programs.
- Sometimes disagree with the treatment or service your loved one is receiving. In this case, you have the right to make a complaint. You can complain directly to the service.

THROUGHOUT YOUR CARING ROLE, YOU HAVE THE RIGHT TO:



Be treated with respect and be in partnership with the supportive services helping your loved one;



Work and be supported by your employers;



Complain about service – if you are unhappy with the service or the person providing the service, you can make a complaint for the person you care for.

WHAT ARE MY LEGAL RIGHTS?



Challenge opinions or decisions – if you feel that arrangements are being made without your input (for example, if your parents medication is changed or a hospital admission is suggested), you should be involved in the decision making process;



You may have the right to information about the health of the person you care for. If the person you care for has given their permission, health professionals are allowed to share information with patients and carers so that everyone can work together (Carer Gateway);



You can learn more about your rights in the Carer Recognition Act (2010).

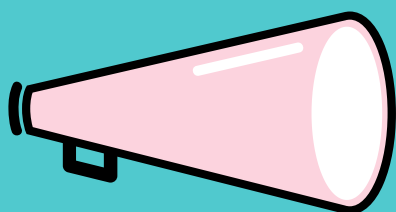
CARING FOR AN ADULT

If you are caring for an adult who needs help with finances, legal matters or property management, you may be able to get someone to act on behalf of them, such as a 'power of attorney', who can make difficult choices easier for you.

A power of attorney gives legal ability to a competent adult so they can act on someone else's behalf. For example, you might be caring for your parent who has mobility difficulties and can no longer go to the bank to pay bills. A power of attorney would be able to go to the bank on their behalf (Carers NSW).

If you are caring for an adult who can't make their own decisions about health care or living arrangements, you may be able to be appointed as their guardian, if you are 18 years or over. A guardian can be a relative, family friend or authorised carer.

ADVOCATING FOR SOMEONE



WHAT ARE MY RESPONSIBILITIES?

When caring for someone who is using health services, you should:

- Let staff know who is, or will be, caring for the person;
- Talk to staff of any issues that may affect you and your loved one;
- Be respectful and considerate to staff, other patients, residents and carers.

Advocacy means that you speak up for someone, and sometimes you might need to advocate for the person you care for to:

- Make sure they get the right information and access to services available;
- Protect their rights, if you feel they are not being respected;
- Make sure they are treated well by services and staff;
- Make sure they are not being discriminated against (Carer Gateway).

There are over 2 million carers of working age in Australia (Young Carer Program 2019).

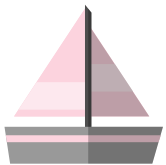
Juggling a caring role with work can be tough. However, a supportive employer and a little bit of flexibility in your workplace could make a big difference to your life.

If you make the decision to talk to your employer about your caring role, it is a good idea to be aware of your rights as a young carer at work. These are protected by anti-discrimination laws, which means your employer cannot discriminate against you because of your caring responsibilities (Young Carer Program 2019).

You also have the right to request special arrangements to help you do your job at the same time as being a young carer.



RIGHTS IN THE WORKPLACE



Access to carer's leave if you are a full time employee – this is time off work in case you need to care for a family member or this is an emergency



Request flexible working arrangements;



You can request a change in working arrangements if you require flexibility because you are young carer;



Some changes in working arrangements may include; changes in hours (e.g. start/finish times), changes in location of work such as working from home if possible;

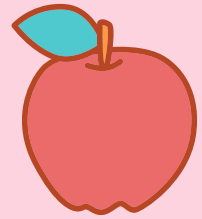


Employees are not able to make the request unless they have worked at least 12 months with their current employer (The Fair Work Ombudsman).

SUPPORTS AT SCHOOL

There are over 100,000 young carers living in NSW, that's at least 1 student in every classroom (Family & Community Services).

Being a student while caring for someone can be hard. The time and energy that caring takes can interfere with your school work and attendance. It's okay to talk with your school, because they may be able to support you with both studying and caring for your loved one (Carer Gateway).



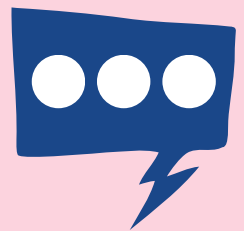
WHAT SUPPORT CAN I GET?



- Possible permission to stay home from school or classes when you need to;
- Possible permission to use your phone to call home;
- Ways to catch up on schoolwork from home (eg: catch up lessons, take home work, e-learning or note taking services);
- Extended deadlines for assignments;
- Special support is available for young carers (under 25) including financial help (Carer Gateway).

WHO CAN I TALK TO?

- Often your school or teachers might not know that you are caring for someone. If you tell them, they might be able to help you;
- At school, you can talk with a trusted teacher, principal or school counselor;
- If it helps, take a friend along to support you;
- You could also ask a parent or friend to speak to them for you.



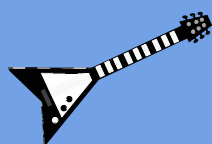
WHAT DO I TELL THEM?

You can tell them as much or little as you want, such as:



- What might be going on at home;
- The extra responsibilities you have when caring for someone;
- How your role is affecting your school attendance and schoolwork;
- You can also discuss special arrangements that might help you.

Keep a diary to track your personal goals



Take time to play a sport, hang with friends, listen to music or go for a walk



Reflect upon your day - what were some positive things that happened?

Talk to someone: friends, family, a counsellor, or other carers



Treat yourself - do something nice for yourself every day



Create a mood journal



There are some free, useful apps that you can download which provide practical tips on self-care and managing your own mental health!

HELPFUL APPS

- [Smiling Mind](#)
- [Headspace - Meditation & Mindfulness](#)
- [Gratitude - Happiness Journal](#)
- [Reachout](#)
- [Happify](#)



SELF-CARE TIPS



Get creative! Draw, paint, take photos

Do things that you love, and that nourish you



REACHOUT



From one-to-one peer support and moderated online communities, to tips, stories and resources, ReachOut offers a wide range of support options that allow young people to engage in the ways they want to, when they want to.

KIDS HELPLINE (1800 55 1800)



If you feel like things may be getting too much, talking to your parents, a doctor, a friend or someone at school is a good place to start. However, you can also ring the Kids Helpline. It is free, confidential, 24/7 and offers phone support, web and email counselling, games, downloads and other information.

**I NEED
HELP!**



COPMI

Children of Parents with a Mental Illness (COPMI) provides online resources for young people that have a parent with mental illness, and resources for parents.

YOUNG CARERS NSW



This is a free program for young carers, that can provide support over the phone, email or in person, as well as practical support like respite camps, activity days, tutoring, counselling, connect you with supports, and more!

COMPLAINTS



If you are unhappy with the way you or the person you are caring for is being treated, and want to know who to submit a complaint to – you can contact:

- **Health Care Complaints Commission:** 1800 043 159
- **Official Visitors:** 1800 208 218. This is a service to contact if your loved one is in hospital or has recently been in hospital.
- **NSW Ombudsman:** 1800 451 542

KOOKABURRA KIDS



Kookaburra Kids delivers services to young people impacted by family mental illness with the aim of empowering them to build resilience, lifelong knowledge and abilities so they can reach their potential. They run things like camps, activity days, and more!

P: 1300 566 525

**I NEED
HELP!**



LITTLE DREAMERS

Little Dreamers have a range of online and in person programs to support young people aged 4 to 25 who provide care for a family member affected by disability, chronic or mental illness, addiction or frail age.

CONTACT US

W: www.mentalhealthcarersnsw.org

P: 1300 554 660

E: MHCNadmin@mentalhealthcarersnsw.org



[facebook.com/
mentalhealthcarers](https://facebook.com/mentalhealthcarers)



[@mhcarersnsw](https://www.instagram.com/mhcarersnsw)



[@mentalhealth
carersnsw](https://twitter.com/mentalhealthcarersnsw)



**Mental Health
Carers NSW**