



HEALTH & DISABILITY COMMISSIONER
TE TOIHAU HAUORA, HAUĀTANGA

When someone

**you care
about**

**has a mental health or
addiction issue**

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Foreword

One of the primary roles of the Mental Health Commissioner is to advocate for the interests of mental health and addiction service users and their families/whānau.

Family/whānau of all ages and from different cultural backgrounds can struggle in the early stages of seeking help for a family/whānau member or friend who may be having mental health or addiction issues. Early access to reliable information, support and services can reduce the distress and long-term effects for all concerned. Early access is particularly important for children and young people during their developmental years. In addition, we know that children of parents with a mental illness are at greater risk than their peers of developing mental illness themselves; however we also know that “risk does not equal destiny” and there are many ways that the risk can be reduced.

The wellbeing of the family/whānau is vital for them to be holders of hope. Knowledge and access to resources in the community are crucial steps in empowering families to help themselves and aid their own healing. These principles are at the heart of this booklet. We hope you find it a useful resource for you and your family/whānau.



Lynne Lane | Mental Health Commissioner

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Introduction

Research has shown that family/whānau involvement during the assessment and treatment of mental health and addiction issues significantly improves outcomes and reduces relapse.

This booklet provides information about how you can help your family/whānau member or friend directly; how you can get outside help for them and for yourself; and some ideas about what you can do to support your own wellbeing.

Mental health and addiction issues do not occur in isolation. We are all part of communities with family/whānau, neighbours, work colleagues and friends.

Someone close to you may change the way they think, feel or behave in response to life events or how they perceive the world. These changes may become an issue for them – or for you – if it results in distress, a loss of quality of life or risky behaviour.

If the impact is serious, the person may be diagnosed by a doctor as having a health condition. It may be described as a mental health or addiction issue.

The impact this has on individuals and families/whānau will depend on your resources, your cultural views and your family stories that help you make sense of life experiences.

Not all District Health Board areas in New Zealand offer the same services. This guide will help you find out what services may be offered in your local community.



What do we mean by family/whānau?



We recognise that there is a wide diversity of families within New Zealand communities.

For Māori, ‘whānau’ is about connecting with and supporting each other, either as an extended family unit (whakapapa, kinship) or in other chosen networks of people (kaupapa, purpose-driven).

In the same way, we use the word ‘family’ to describe the wide range of families that exist throughout New Zealand. We use the term “family/whānau” throughout this booklet to reflect this diversity.

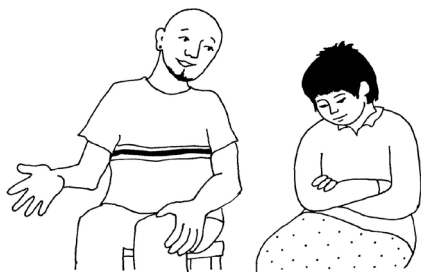
Family/whānau is not limited to relationships based on blood ties. Family/whānau can include a person's extended family/whānau, their partners, friends, advocates, guardians, or other representatives. In the area of mental health and addiction, the person who is unwell decides who his or her family/whānau is.

For children or young people up to the age of 16, parents and guardians have decision-making powers that other family/whānau members generally do not have. However, in some cases, young people may be able to make their own health decisions before the age of 16.

The first signs that something is not right

If you are concerned that something is “not right” with a member of your family/whānau:

- Talk with them about what is going on. Express things from your own point of view. It's more helpful to say, “I feel worried when....” or “Can you tell me about ...” than it is to say, “You are acting strangely”.
- Think about which family/whānau member would be best at finding out what is going on for the person involved.
- Keep offering to listen.
- Search the internet or go to the library; other people's stories may help.
- Talk about seeking help from outside your family/whānau.
- **Ask your family/whānau member what they would find helpful.-** They may want to try alternatives such as traditional healing, expressive therapies or natural remedies such as dietary changes or massage.



If you have concerns about your family/whānau member's immediate safety, take active steps to get help. Such as:

- Talk to your General Practitioner (GP)
- Ring the local mental health crisis team
- Talk with family/whānau
- Ring the Citizen's Advice Bureau to ask for family support
- Ring the local "Supporting Families"

If there is risk of harm to any person, ring the Police on 111.

"I noticed my daughter staying in bed all day and staying up all night. She seemed restless and scared, not her usual chatty self. Her brother noticed it too – he was the best one to talk to her. He taught me how to be with her, how to talk less forcefully. I was worried and my words came out wrong. We decided together to talk to our local doctor. She told us about the community mental health and addiction services and a family support agency."

How to support your family/whānau member

“My partner said the things that most helped him was when I stated my boundaries clearly – what I would and would not do. I never told him what to do even when he was acting very strangely. I told him I was getting help for me. That was true. He says that gave him a sense of safety when he was pretty scared about the millions of thoughts rushing through his head. He remembers really well how I spoke to him.”

These are some of the things you can do to support your family/whānau member:

- Accept that their experiences are real. It's OK to say, “I don't experience it that way, but I get that you do”.
- Understand that recovery is most likely to happen when your family/whānau member is supported to lead his or her own recovery rather than having decisions made for them.
- If there are things that your family/whānau member does not want you to do, respect their wishes - unless it will cause direct harm to them or to others.

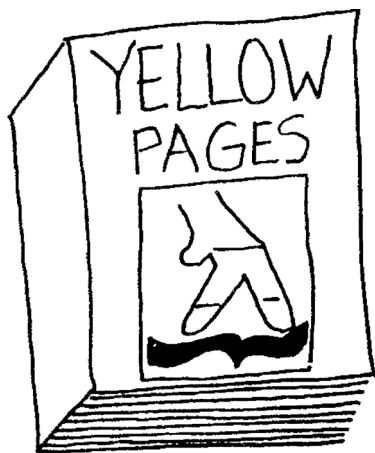
- Help your family/whānau member to find employment, to stay in their job, return to study, find suitable accommodation and to take part in activities that are meaningful to them. These can be some of the most useful things you can do to help.
- If what your family/whānau member wants when they are well conflicts with what they want when they are unwell, go with what they say when they are well. You could consider helping them to make an advance directive.
- Seek professional help.



How to get professional help

There are many ways to get professional help:

- Contact your local health centre or doctor (GP) who can make an assessment and provide treatment and refer you to appropriate specialist services and family support agencies; or check your phone book under Health Services.
- See a counsellor through your local school or health centre, or privately.
- Approach your local community mental health and addiction service. They accept both self-referrals and family referrals; however, some may require a referral from your GP. This service will be listed in your phone book under 'Hospitals and other Health Service Providers'. You can also contact your local hospital. These services are provided free of charge.



Community mental health and addiction services are made up of different types of services. They include drug and alcohol services, kaupapa Māori services, services for older people, maternal mental health services and perental and child and adolescent services.

Entering a mental health and addiction service

Most people who need mental health and addiction services are assessed and treated in the community.

When more intensive or acute care is needed, people may need to be admitted into inpatient care, where they will stay for one or more nights. This is usually a voluntary process.

However, in some situations where a person's safety is concerned, the Mental Health Act may be used to ensure that a person receives assessment and treatment, even if they do not want it. Any concerned person can request that someone be assessed for mental health issues. See the next section for information about compulsory assessment and treatment.



Compulsory assessment and treatment

If necessary your family/whānau member can receive compulsory assessment or treatment under the Mental Health (Compulsory Assessment and Treatment) Act 1992 or the Alcoholism and Drug Addiction Act 1966.

For mental health issues, your family/whānau member may go into an inpatient unit within a hospital, or they may be treated under a Community Treatment Order in the community. For alcoholism and drug addiction, treatment is given at specially certified agencies.

For more information about compulsory assessment and treatment for mental health issues, see The Mental Health Act leaflet which is available from local

branches of Supporting Families in Mental Illness.

(See the end of this booklet for contact details.)



“I am so glad I got support for myself and shared what I learned with my family”.



“It took a while for me to know that recovery of wellbeing means something different for everyone in the family. Working out what it means for me has made me more understanding”.

Section 7A of the Mental Health Act requires mental health and addiction services to consult with you as family/whānau during the compulsory assessment and treatment process unless it is not in the best interests of your family/whānau member, or it is not reasonably practicable.

The clinician must consult your family/whānau member before deciding whether family/whānau consultation is in their best interests. If you know your family/

whānau member is receiving treatment and you have not been contacted, ask to be involved. If the clinician decides that consulting with you is not in the best interests of your family/whānau member, be sure to ask the reasons for the decision, and in what other ways you can be involved. You can take a support person to the meetings.

Family/whānau participation in services

People working in mental health and addiction services should encourage and support family/whānau participation in the recovery of service users and ensure that family/whānau including the children of service users, have access to information, education and support.

As family/whānau you can expect to be treated with respect and recognised by mental health and addiction services for the value you bring to your family/whānau member's recovery in terms of ongoing support, understanding and background knowledge.

When your family/whānau member first starts using mental health and addiction services you should get an information pack containing general information about



the services, treatment options, available family support services and helpful websites to inform you about specific mental health and addiction issues.

Mental health and addiction services using the family/whānau participation approach will also:

- Refer you to family support agencies who can inform, guide and address the needs of your family/whānau – whether or not your family/whānau member is receiving services or wants you to be involved
- Provide access to interpreters and advocates
- Welcome any information you can provide that might be helpful for the purposes of helping your family/whānau member. Before sharing this information you may want to ask the clinician if they can keep it confidential, if this is important to you
- Offer you a chance to meet with the clinician, with or without your family/whānau member present
- Provide a guide to how you can make complaints, and how your family/whānau can provide input into planning, implementing, monitoring, and evaluating mental health and addiction services
- Engage a family/whānau advisor to help provide for effective family/whānau involvement within the service.

As family/whānau you can:

- Request any of the services above
- Assist your family/whānau member to refer him or herself through your local health centre or doctor, or approach the relevant mental health and addiction service directly

- Decide which family/whānau members will be available for contact by mental health and addiction services, and what their role will be
- Ask clinical staff to explain things in a simple way, without complicated medical terms or abbreviations



Some useful questions to ask clinical staff at mental health and addiction services are:

- What is the name of the main person I can contact at this service (sometimes called a ‘case manager’ or ‘key worker’)?
- What is the plan for treatment and discharge from inpatient care?
- What medication side effects should we be aware of?
- What do you recommend if medication does not improve things?
- How will I be informed of and involved in assessment, treatment and discharge meetings?
- How does this treatment plan support recovery?

- What else can I do to support my family/whānau member's recovery?
- Where can I get support for myself?
- What financial assistance is available to help with travel and accommodation when visiting my family/whānau member?

“My husband began hiding things, not going to work, saying strange things. I had three children to care for. They were my first priority. In time we healed ourselves, with help from some really caring people who didn't see us as sick individuals but treated us as a family going through a hard time together.”



Some services have a family support person, or you can be referred to a family support agency. The questions you can ask that person or agency include:

- Can our family/whānau get help with financial support during this time?
- Can we access carer support subsidy and how?
- Can we meet or talk to other families/whānau with similar experience?
- How do we access personal counselling?
- Are there any structured activities in our area such as workshops, support groups and education evenings?
- What can we do if the clinician refuses to share information about our family/whānau member with us?

For more information on family/whānau participation in services:

- Participating in Partnership: Guidelines for Enabling Effective Family Whānau participation In CAMH and AOD services in New Zealand (2009) by Lumb, T. Available at www.werrycentre.org.nz
- Family Inclusion in Mental Health Services (2007) by Fitzgerald & Galyer. Available at www.hdc.org.nz/publications and
- Family Inclusive Practice in the Addiction Field (2005) by Kina Trust. Available at www.kinatrust.org.nz

The Privacy Act: Does it affect family/whānau participation?

The Privacy Act 1993 and the Health Information Privacy Code 1994 set out when mental health and addiction services can release information about an individual.

If your family/whānau member is receiving mental health or addiction services they will usually decide whether or not they want information to be disclosed. If they are too unwell to decide this, their clinician will usually decide for them. The rules governing privacy

“My son didn’t want me involved at first – he was too ashamed. They kept asking him though and it’s easier now. I don’t need to know as much as I thought. But when he stays with us I need to know about his medication.”

of mental health information essentially say that if a clinician does not believe it is in the best interests of a person to disclose information, they do not have to disclose it.

You can share any information you think the services might find helpful. However, remember that the services will have to tell your family/whānau member that the information came from you.

Mental health and addiction services working from a families/whānau participation approach will ask how they can best involve family/whānau at this time bearing in mind privacy requirements.



If you have any concerns around the privacy of your family/whānau member's information, you can ask to speak to the organisation's Privacy Officer. If you are not satisfied with their response you can contact the office of the Privacy Commissioner on 0800 803 909.

Caring for your own wellbeing

It is important to take care of your own wellbeing when providing support to your family/whānau member with a mental health or addiction issue.

Take care to:

- Look after your own health and wellbeing.
- Maintain a regular rest, recreation, diet and exercise routine.
- Decide what refreshes you – and do it regularly.
- Celebrate the good stuff.
- Ask yourselves how you are managing as a family/whānau.
- Identify and acknowledge your own feelings.
- Give yourselves permission to seek support where needed.

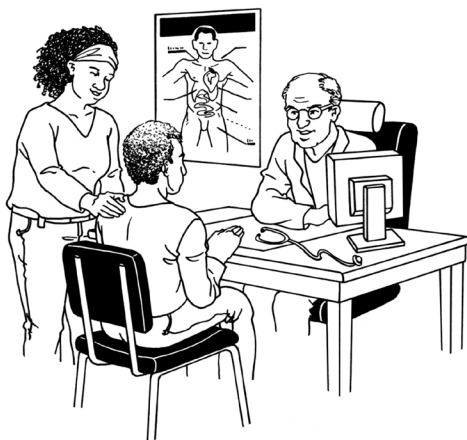


“Many hands make light work! We believe this in my community but we still find it shameful to ask for help when it’s to do with the mind. Now I teach other families – I even went back home and translated what I learned from a family education course.”

If you need support:

- Friends, neighbours and co-workers may be a source of support and assistance in helping you decide what to do.
- Some families/whānau find it useful to consult with a spiritual or cultural leader. Contact your local church or Marae for more information.
- Many addiction services will provide support to your family/whānau even if your family/whānau member is not receiving treatment.
- Call 0800 help lines in the phone book, or local support groups or health advocates for general information and assistance. Some suggestions are included at the end of this booklet –there is space to add your own.

“When the whānau asked me how she was, I said ‘Go and see for yourself’. Now they are not scared of her or anyone with mental illness, and I am not doing it all on my own. We go to the local marae where I get a massage and everyone looks out for our girl. She has taught us a lot about ourselves.”



Useful resources:

For help around alcohol and drug use, read *Living Well: Exploring strategies for the family and friends of people using alcohol and drugs*; published by Kina Trust. You can get a copy by phoning the **Alcohol Drug Helpline on: 0800 787 797** from your local drug and alcohol service. You can also contact your GP for information and advice.

The Kites Trust in Wellington has published a useful document, *Kites Kids Plan*, to help encourage discussion of mental health issues within families, and help kids work out an action plan if someone in their family/whānau has a mental health or addiction issue. You can download copies of the document from the 'Resources' page at www.kites.org.nz



Leaving inpatient care

It is important to get systems and supports in place when your family/whānau member is leaving community or inpatient mental health services (being discharged).

Things are more likely to go smoothly where there is good communication and coordination between you and your family/whānau member, the clinical team at the community mental health service or inpatient unit, and post-discharge services.

To make the process easier, family/whānau can:

- Be involved in discharge planning before it happens
- Ask for information about how you can continue to help your family/whānau member in their recovery once they are back home
- Ask about what kind of ongoing post-discharge professional support will be available to you and your family/whānau member
- Ask about being involved in ongoing treatment planning
- Ask about a relapse prevention plan
- Ask about communication and coordination between you and your family/whānau member, the clinical team at the hospital, and post-discharge services
- Be connected or referred to a family support agency.

Planning for the future

Advance directives

Advance directives allow a family/whānau member to set out in writing what support and treatment they would like should they become unwell.

Through an advance directive a person can identify which family/whānau members will serve what roles and also what treatment the person would prefer when they are unwell. The advance directive should be included in your family/whānau member's recovery plan and they and you should be given a copy.

A family/whānau plan-for-action provides more certainty, and access to a wider range of support should mental health and/or addiction issues re-appear.



To obtain a copy of 'Advance directives in mental health care and treatment: Information for mental health service users' search for it in the Resources section at www.hdc.org.nz or you can phone the Health and Disability Commissioner to request a copy on **0800 11 22 33**.

Enduring Power of Attorney

Under the Protection of Personal and Property Rights Act 1988 (PPPR Act) a competent person may grant to someone an enduring power of attorney (EPOA) to make health care decisions on their behalf, in the event they become incompetent to make their own health care choices. An enduring power of attorney can be activated

when a person is no longer competent to make their own decisions, for example in the case of dementia. The person granted the EPOA will often have a close relationship with the person giving the EPOA which means they may be able to best reflect what that person would have wanted in a particular situation.

For more information about EPOAs, see <http://www.hdc.org.nz/education/presentations/advance-directives,-living-wills-and-questions-of-competence>.

If an EPOA is in place, everyone involved should have a copy of this document.

Contacts

Emergencies

If you need emergency assistance call the emergency services (Police, Fire or Ambulance) on 111. If there is serious or immediate risk that someone could be harmed, call 111 and ask for the Police.

Crisis

If your family/whānau member feels extremely distressed and you find yourself in a situation of crisis that you cannot handle on your own, get help.

You can call the local mental health crisis line listed in the front of your phone book under ‘Hospitals and other health service providers’; or phone your local hospital and ask for the mental health crisis team. If your family/whānau member has received previous help from mental health and addiction services, you may choose to contact their case manager at the service they used.

Mental health crisis teams have different names in different regions. For example, some are called the Crisis Assessment and Treatment Team (known as CATT) or the Psychiatric Assessment Triage Team (PATT).

Mental health crisis teams are a mobile service and will help you manage the situation at a home or elsewhere in the community until an appointed clinician is available.

Phone Number for Your Local Crisis Service:

Please note that your family/whānau member may already have a ‘treatment/ care plan’ or a ‘crisis/ recovery plan’ that you can refer to for help. If they do not have such a plan, you may want to discuss with them about preparing one in consultation with their clinician or case manager.

Your Local Health Centre or Doctor:

Help for your family/whānau member and you

Helplines

- Suicide Prevention Helpline: Call 0508 828 865 (24 hours, 7 days)
- Alcohol Drug Helpline: Call 0800 787 797 (10am to 10pm, 7 days); or visit www.drughelp.org.nz
- Depression Helpline: Call 0800 111 757; or visit www.depression.org.nz
- Gambling Helpline: Call 0800 654 655 (24 hours, 7 days); or visit www.gamblinghelpline.co.nz
- Mental Health Crisis Line: Call 0800 611 116

- Lifeline New Zealand: Call 0800 543 354 (24 hours, 7 days) for telephone counselling and support service (available in different languages).
- Netsafe (txt/cyber bullying): Call 0508 638 723; or visit www.netsafe.org.nz
- Youthline: Call 0800 376 633; Free txt 234; or visit www.youthline.co.nz
- What's Up Helpline: Call 0800 942 8787 (5-18 year olds, 1pm-11pm); or visit www.whatsup.co.nz

Look in your phonebook or search the internet and write down some 0800 helplines you find useful:



Information, support & advocacy for families, whānau

Supporting Families in Mental Illness has branches across the country that provide free and local information, support and advocacy services for the family/whānau of people with mental illness. www.supportingfamilies.org.nz.

Skylight is an organisation that provides support to children, young people, adults and their families/whānau through change, loss, trauma and grief – whatever the cause. Call 0800 299 100. www.skylight.org.nz.

In many areas of New Zealand other services are also contracted to provide support, information and advocacy to families/whānau. Ask your local mental health service for details.

Your local family/whānau support service:

Information on services for specific population groups

Healthpoint website has a directory where you can search for specific mental health and addiction service providers within your region. www.healthpoint.co.nz

Le Va provides information and support for Pasifika people. www.leva.co.nz

Te Rau Matatini provides information and support for Māori. www.matatini.co.nz

Useful Websites

NZ Websites

- Citizens Advice Bureau www.cab.org.nz
- Community law centre website www.communitylaw.org.nz
- Engage NZ has a wide range of mental health tools & strategies aimed at people who experience mental health distress & their families, whānau and communities
www.engagenz.co.nz
- Headspace: A website for young people.
www.headspace.org.nz
- Health and Disability Commissioner www.hdc.org.nz or phone 0800 11 22 33.
- Health and Disability Advocacy Service
<http://advocacy.hdc.org.nz> or phone 0800 555 050.
- ISPS NZ (International Society for Psychological & Social Approaches to Psychosis-NZ branch). www.isps-nz.org.nz
- Mental Health Foundation (NZ) website
www.mentalhealth.org.nz
- Ministry of Health website for DHBs information
www.health.govt.nz
- NZ Medicines and Medical Devices Safety Authority website for information on drugs available in New Zealand.
www.medsafe.govt.nz
- Privacy Commissioner's website www.privacy.org.nz or phone 0800 803 909

- SPARX: a computer program that helps young people learn skills to deal with feeling down, depressed or stressed.
www.sparx.org.nz
- SPINZ: website of Suicide Prevention Information New Zealand. *www.spinz.org.nz*
- Supporting Families in Mental Illness – The first place to go for help *www.supportingfamilies.org.nz*
- The Lowdown: Free txt 5626; A website that helps young kiwis understand and deals with depression.
www.thelowdown.co.nz
- The National Depression Initiative: Help with depression using a ‘journal’ with Sir John Kirwan
www.depression.org.nz
- Webhealth – health provider directory
www.linkage.co.nz/webhealth
- YOU'RE ON Common Ground a website for family whānau and friends to help our young people enjoy positive mental health and wellbeing *www.commonground.org.nz*

International Websites

- COPMI (Children of Parents with a Mental Illness) national initiative develops information for parents, their partners, carers, family and friends in support of these children.
www.copmi.net.au
- The International Hearing Voices Network
www.intervoiceonline.org

NZ Support Groups/ Organisations

- Alcoholics Anonymous website www.aa.org.nz
- Carers NZ. National registered charity which provides information, advice, learning & support for family carers supporting someone with health and disability needs.
www.carers.net.nz & www.carersair.net.nz
- Eating Disorders Association New Zealand. www.ed.org.nz
- Families Commission is New Zealand's centre of excellence for knowledge about families and whānau.
www.familiescommission.org.nz
- Kina Families and Addiction Trust works towards development of family inclusive practices and programmes
www.kinatrust.org.nz
- Like Minds is a national programme aimed at reducing the stigma and discrimination associated with mental illness.
www.likeminds.org.nz
- New Zealand Health and Disability Community Organisations and Support Groups website for information on community groups and organisations.
www.everybody.co.nz
- The Family Services Directory lists other support agencies in your area. www.familyservices.govt.nz/directory
- Werry Centre is a national centre that works towards improving mental health of young people in New Zealand.
www.werrycentre.org.nz



Disclaimer

All the recommended reading resources, links to organisations and other websites provided in this booklet are for reader reference only and should not be treated as an endorsement by the Health and Disability Commissioner.



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