



MI Fact Sheet Series

UNDERSTANDING AND MANAGING MENTAL ILLNESS

The mental health system in the ACT

General Information

- Public and private, government and non-government, and hospital and community elements comprise the Australian Capital Territory mental health services
- The territory government is the major provider of acute services for people with serious mental illness
- The ACT Mental Health Service oversees provision of public mental health services. Services are delivered by four regional health centres (Belconnen, City, Tuggeranong and Woden). Multidisciplinary teams in each centre provide assessment and treatment for adults and children with mental health needs
- Within community based and regional services there are both:
 - Hospital Inpatient and Outpatient Services; and
 - Community Mental Health Services
- There is also a number of statewide, regional and specialist services, including the Perinatal Mental Health Services, Forensic Psychiatry, Transcultural Services, and Dual Diagnosis Services
- Psychiatric Disability Rehabilitation Support Services are also provided in each region.

Adult Mental Health Services

Hospital Inpatient Services

- **Acute Inpatient Services and Secure/Extended Care Inpatient Services** generally provide voluntary and involuntary short-term management during acute and sub-acute phases of mental illness. Canberra Hospital and Calvary Hospital are the two major inpatient services, but the Brian Hennessy Rehabilitation Centre also has a secure extended care unit, Hyson Green is a private medical unit that provides inpatient services, and Queen Elizabeth II Family Centre also has a Residential Care Unit for inpatients.

Community-based services and teams

- **Crisis Assessment and Treatment Teams (CATT)** provide a 24-hour, seven day a week service used for assessment and treatment of people with mental illness in crisis situations.
- **Community Mental Health Services** provide assessment, treatment, consultancy, continuing care and case management.

Private psychiatric services

- Although General Practitioners (GPs) are generally in the private sector, in practice they form part of the public mental health system

- Private GPs are often the first point of contact for people with mental health problems. GPs may be more accessible than mental health specialists, likely to know about local support services and able to offer ongoing general medical treatment
- People with mental illness treated by Mental Health Services will most often be discharged to the care of GPs in their local community as soon as is practically possible. This makes having a relationship with a good GP very important
- The most common way of seeing a private psychiatrist is through a referral from a GP, which allows the Medicare rebate to be claimed. (Fees vary, and some psychiatrists bulk bill). Private psychiatrists may not always be accessible, especially in rural areas
- Private psychiatrists mainly provide outpatient services from their consulting rooms or inpatient services to private hospitals. They may have specialist interests (eg working with particular age groups or disorders, and using specific therapies)
- Private psychiatrists and GPs may work together with case managers and others in developing a management plan
- The private sector incorporates private psychiatric hospitals, but these generally exist only in larger population centres, and they do not take people who require involuntary detention.

Psychiatric Disability Rehabilitation and Support Services

A range of services provides employment placement, support, information, day and residential programs and family respite. Some are run by not for profit organisations with government funding. These services include the Canberra Schizophrenia Fellowship Inc., ARAFMI, Richmond Fellowship and the Mental Health Foundation.

- **Psychosocial Rehabilitation Day Programs** assist people with severe psychiatric disabilities to improve their quality of life, participate in everyday activities and achieve an optimal level of independent functioning in the community. This objective is achieved through the development of social and living skills in a group context, through centre-based and community access programs.
- **Residential Rehabilitation** provides intensive psychosocial rehabilitation and support in group accommodation prior to residents living independently. The emphasis is on developing or regaining skills to deal with daily living activities. Emphasis is placed on

developing a resident's confidence to begin or continue schooling, training or employment, as well as supporting positive contact with family and friends. Working in a group enhances self esteem and social skills and provides important peer support. This form of rehabilitation is particularly helpful for young people who have recently developed serious mental illness.

- **Respite** provides a short term change in environment for a client and a break for carers. It includes both formal and informal psychosocial rehabilitation components. It may involve day activities (including social and recreational) in-home support, holidays and adventure activities and residential components. Respite can be planned and/or regular and in some areas short notice respite is available.
- **Employment services** of both state and commonwealth departments provide employment placement and support to people with a mental illness. For example, in Supported Employment, a job coach may assist with learning the job and adjusting to the environment, so that people can return to work at their own pace.

Useful references

ACT Mental Health Service
132281 or 02 6207 5111
www.mentalhealth.act.gov.au

Crisis Assessment and
Treatment Service (CATT)
02 6205 1065

Child and Adolescent Mental
Health Services
02 6205 1971

Legal Aid Commission
1300 654 314

Mental Health Tribunal
02 6217 4277

National Alliance of the Mentally Ill (USA)
www.nami.org

Canberra Schizophrenia Fellowship Inc
02 6205 1349

Mental Illness Fellowship of Australia
www.mifellowshipaustralia.org.au

Mental Illness Fellowship Victoria
www.mifellowship.org

Mental Illness Fellowship of Australia fact sheets

Mental health legal framework in
the Australian Capital Territory

What can friends and family do to help
a person experiencing mental illness?

Family and carer supports and services