



**Supporting
Our Family**



COMIC

Children Of Mentally Ill Consumers
under the auspices of
Mental Illness Fellowship of SA Inc.

Mental Health Resource Centre
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MARLESTON SA 5033

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Dear Parent/Caregiver,

We are a group of Adult Children that have grown up with a parent living with a mental illness. As we were growing up there were some things that could have helped us. We would like to share these with you.

Children may often not understand what is going on. They may need to have your illness explained to them. If you are unwell and require help do not be afraid to ask for it. Your support/key worker are there to assist you. Please let your workers know that you are a parent so that they can source extra support for you and your child/children.

COMIC promotes awareness of the children's needs. Acknowledgment of and education about mental illness is our top priority. Parenting is challenging, and we empathise with the added difficulties that living mental illness can bring.

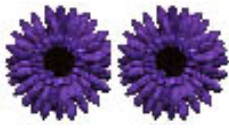
This Supporting Our Family Kit has been put together with the aim of encouraging discussion of mental illness with your child/children and maintaining the family unit.

We hope this letter shows you that you are not alone in your difficult times. We want to stress that it is ***alright*** to ask for help, it is ***alright*** to link into services and finally it is ***alright*** to talk with your child/children about your mental illness. If you do not feel comfortable speaking to your child/children please ask your support/key worker to do so.

Keep well, safe and happy.

Yours in caring

Paola and Nerrelle
COMIC Co-convenors
and all the other Adult Children



My Care Plan

My name: My birthdate:.....

My parents/caregiver's names:.....

My brothers and sisters names and ages:

.....

If my parent suddenly has to go into hospital I can call these people:

	Name	Phone Number
1)
2)
3)

Whilst my parent is in hospital I would like to stay with either:

	Name	Their relationship to me	Home Phone No.	Work/Mobile Phone No.
1)
2)
3)

Please tick this box to show that this has been discussed with the people listed.

I would like to be (*tick one*)

Picked up by the people I am staying with.

Dropped off at their home by a FAYS or a Mental Health Worker.

Other.....

My parent/s will be staying at:.....

I can phone them on or visit them at

My school is:

I can tell these people at school what is going on:.....

.....

These are the people I need to tell that my home situation has temporarily changed:

.....

My Doctor's name and phone number is:

My Medicare Number is:..... Current medicines I use are:.....

When I stay with people it's important that I take with me: (include favourite toys, clothes, and any medication)

I will get my pocket money from.....

My pets are:

Name	Animal type	Items to be taken with them (food etc)
1)		
2)		
3)		

They will be cared for by

If there were something worrying me I would deal with it by.....

I would like to be told what is going on with my parent/s by these people.....

I can rely on these people when my parent/s are feeling unwell.....

Other things that I need to remember are:

I have agreed to this plan being put into action by when my parent/caregiver becomes unwell.

Signatures

Date: / /

..... Child Parent/Caregiver Parent/Caregiver Worker
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For the worker to fill out:

Have the children/s needs been met, in particular, has the child been informed about the nature and condition of the parent/caregiver's illness? Yes No

If not, why not?

Has the child had an opportunity to discuss or express their feelings? Yes No

Are there any protective issues? Yes No

.....

Are there any custody restrictions? Yes No

Which agencies/custodial person(s) are involved in the care of this child (include key worker and contact details):

.....

Please tick the above boxes when the above agencies/custodial parent(s) have been notified.

I need to let these people know that is unwell:

.....

This is the number of children that can stay at the listed residences:

.....

Other notes:

.....



Sample Letter

This is an example of a letter you could write to the child's school

To - The Class Teacher/School Counsellor/ The Principal

I am writing to you to negotiate a school plan for

Child's Name Class

who has a family member that at times experiences symptoms of mental illness. Generally the person in question functions well within the community and prefers not to be labelled. However, there may be times when the child would benefit from extra support through the school system.

- At home I have
- Explained the mental illness to my the child
 - I have a care plan in place (we could discuss whether the school would like a copy?)

I nominate (relationship i.e.. husband, grandma)

telephone number address.....

.....
to advise the class teacher should our family be experiencing a stressful time. Our family would greatly appreciate it if you try to reinforce with the child that mental illness is just another form of illness and not something to be frightened or ashamed of as this is the attitude we try to reinforce within our home.

In the event the primary carer in the family is hospitalised the child will be cared for by

.....(relationship ie. husband, grandma)

telephone numberaddress.....

I trust that if you have any further questions about mental illness that I can answer them myself or direct you to someone else or perhaps we could make an appointment. Should you have any concerns about the child's behaviour or learning capacity, please feel free to discuss this with me. I have taken steps to ensure that the impact of the family member's condition on the child is kept to a minimum. The schools cooperation in helping educate and support the child about this important matter is valuable to me.

Yours sincerely

Signature



Your Checklist

Tick these off as they are completed.

- Your child needs to know what your illness is and how it can affect you.
- Acknowledge that you have a child/children when you seek help with your doctor, key worker etc
- Have a Care Plan for your child should you go into hospital or need to go away. Make sure your key worker has a copy (You could also give a copy to your child's school.)
- Encourage your child to link into sports groups, youth groups and go out and have some fun.
- Do not be afraid to ask for help - it may be the best thing you will ever do. We all need help sometimes and we shouldn't have to suffer alone.
- Do some nice things for yourself. Join a support group, craft group, a walking group. Make time for yourself too.



"COMIC CORNER" RESOURCE MATERIALS

THESE BOOKS AND VIDEOS ARE CURRENTLY NOT FOR LOAN BUT CAN BE VIEWED at the MENTAL ILLNESS FELLOWSHIP SA INC. (COMICLIBRARY)
We have provided prices (current at March 2002), and a contact address, should you wish to purchase your own copy.

Children 0 - 5 yrs

- **JAKE'S DINOSAUR** *Anne Sved – Williams (1996)*
A picture book for 3-6 years olds
Available from Helen Mayo House, Glenside Hospital,
PO Box 17 EASTWOOD SA 5063
Phone: (08) 8303 1451 \$16.50
- **ROBBY ROSE AND MONKEY** *A. Louis*
A picture book for 3-6 year olds
Available from Helen Mayo House (as above) \$16.50

Children 9- 12yrs

- **YOU'RE NOT ALONE** \$ 9.00
SANE Guide to mental illness for children
Available from SANE Bookshop
www.sane.org
- **HANDLE WITH CARE** *ARAFMI*
Association of Relatives & Friends of the Mentally Ill (SA)
Mental Health Resource Centre
1 Richmond Road Keswick
PO Box 310 Marlestone 5035
Ph: 8221 5160 \$ 7.00

Adolescents 13-18yrs

- **ABOUT MENTAL ILLNESS** *ARAFMI*
Association of Relatives & Friends of the Mentally Ill (SA)
Mental Health Resource Centre
1 Richmond Road Keswick
PO Box 310 Marlestone 5035
Ph: 8221 5160 \$ 5.00

- **THE ILLUSTRATED MOTHER** *Jacqueline Wilson*
Dymocks Bookstore \$14.95
- **JOE'S DIARY** *SANE Australia*
Available from SFSA INC Adelaide
Mental Health Resource Centre
Website: www.sane.org \$9.00 + postage and handling
- **IS THERE ANYBODY OUT THERE** *COMMUNITY FOCUS (QLD)*
Comic Book
COMMUNITY FOCUS (QLD)
Ph: (07) 5479 3110
- **THE UNINVITED GUEST** *OFFSPRING (SA)*
Written by Anne Kasprzak and the young people from *Offspring*
(Southern Region)
Email: comic.admin@bigpond.com for a copy

ADULT CHILDREN (over 18 years)

- **HIDDEN VICTIMS/HIDDEN HEALERS** *Julie Tallard Johnson (1988)*
Website: www.amazon.com
- **WOMEN WHO LOVE TOO MUCH** *Robin Norwood (re-issue 1991)*
Website: www.amazon.com
- **MY PARENT'S KEEPER** *Eva Marian Brown*
Website: www.amazon.com

PARENTS

- **THE BEST FOR ME AND MY BABY.** Managing Mental Health during Pregnancy and Early Parenthood. Health professionals and parents working together. Australian Infant, Child, Adolescent and Family Mental Health Association for the Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing, April 2004. Further resources and information about the initiative can be found at: www.copmi.net.au

FAMILIES

- **FAMILY TALK.** Tips and information for families where a parent has a mental health problem or disorder. Australian, Infant, Child, Adolescent and Family Mental Health Association for the Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing. April 2004. Further resources and information about the initiative can be found at: www.copmi.net.au

VIDEOS

- **MY MOM STILL LOVES ME** (Includes a video - Cat-a-lion and book)
Email: Ashanks@tvmhmr.org
- **HARD WORDS**
ARAFEMI Melbourne Victoria
Email: arafemi@infoxchange.net.au
- **KOPING**
The KOPING Forum
Queensland
Phone: (07) 3835-1434

MENTAL HEALTH SERVICE PROVIDERS

- **Children of Parents with a Mental Illness** Vicki Cowling, Ed. (1999)
A summary of issues, needs, service descriptions and recommendations for service providers
Available from Australian Council of Educational Research (ACER)
Phone: (03) 9277 5656 Website: www.acerpress.com.au
- **Children of Parents with a Mental Illness 2** Vicki Cowling, Ed. (2004)
Personal and clinical perspectives.
Available from Australian Council of Educational Research (ACER)
Phone: (03) 9277 5656 Website: www.acerpress.com.au
- **Children Of Parents Affected By a Mental Illness Scoping Project Report.**
Australian Infant, Child, Adolescent and Family Mental Health Association. Canberra.
Department of Health and Aged Care, 2001.
- **Crossing Bridges: Training Resources For Working With Mentally Ill Parents and Their Children: Trainer.** Kate Mayes, Marie Diggins and Adrian Falkov.
London: Department of Health, 1998
- **Crossing Bridges: Training Resources for Working with Mentally Ill Parents and their Children: Reader – For Managers, Practitioners and Trainers.** Edited by Adrian Falkov.
London: Department of Health, 1998
- **Peer Support for Children of Parents with a Mental Illness: Program Design and Evaluation.** Rosemary Cuff and Jonathan Pietsch
Melbourne: Mental Health Research Institute, 1997.
- **Southern Partnership Project: Listen to the Children: Interagency Collaboration to Effectively Meet the Needs of Families with Dependant Children where Parents have a Mental Illness.** Vicki Cowling, Parkville, Victoria: University of Melbourne, 1997.
- **Working Together: Families In which a Parent has a Mental Illness: Developing Best Practise for Service Provision and Interagency Collaboration.**
Jonathan Pietsch and Liz Short
Melbourne: Mental Health Research Institute, 1996.
- **Principles and Actions for Services and People Working with Children of Parents with a Mental Illness.**
Australian Infant, Child, Adolescent and Family Mental Health Association for the
Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing, April 2004.
Further resources and information about the initiative can be found at: www.copmi.net.au
- **The Best for Me and My Baby.** Managing Mental Health during Pregnancy and Early Parenthood. Health professionals and parents working together.
Australian Infant, Child, Adolescent and Family Mental Health Association for the
Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing, April 2004.
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WEBSITES

- **AICAFMHA** (Australian Infant Child Adolescent Family Mental Health Association)
Website: www.aicafmha.net.au
- **AUSEINET**
Website: www.auseinet.com
- **CARER'S ASSOCIATION**
Website: www.carers-sa.asn.au
- **CHAMPS Worldwide**
Website: www.champsworldwide.com
- **COMIC** (Children of Mentally Ill Consumers/Parents)
Website: www.howstat.com/comic
Email: comic.admin@bigpond.com
Contact: Paola and Nerrelle
- **COPMI** (Children of Parents with a Mental Illness Initiative)
Website: www.copmi.net.au
- **HEADROOM**
Website: www.headroom.net.au
- **KIDS HELP LINE**
Website: www.kidshelp.com.au
- **MAKEANOISE**
Website: <http://www.makeanoise.ysp.org.au>
- **MENTAL ILLNESS FELLOWSHIP OF SA INC**
Website: www.mifsa.org.au
- **MIND MATTERS**
A school education program
Website: www.curriculum.edu.au/mindmatters
- **MULTICULTURAL MENTAL HEALTH AUSTRALIA**
Website: www.mmha.org.au
- **REACHOUT**
Website: www.reachout.asn.au/home
- **SANE** Website: www.sane.org

IMPORTANT PHONE NUMBERS

1. Carer _____
2. Carer _____
3. Key Worker _____
4. General Practitioner _____
5. Parent Help Line *1300 364 100*
6. Crisis Care *13 16 11*
7. ACIS (Assessment & Crisis Intervention Service) *13 14 65*
8. Life Line *13 11 14*
9. Kids Helpline *1800 55 1800*



Feedback

We would welcome your comments about the content of this kit. They will provide us with necessary feedback to modify future versions of the kit.

We do not need to know who you are but some data is essential.

1. Are you a parent? Yes No
2. Are you a child? Yes No
3. Are you a consumer? Yes No
4. Are you a carer? Yes No
5. Did you find this information helpful? Yes No

6. What other information would you like to see included in the kit?
.....
.....
.....

7. Do you have any other comments you would like to add?
.....
.....
.....

We appreciate your time and effort in completing this feedback sheet. You can forward the sheet to

COMIC (Children Of Mentally Ill Consumers)
PO Box 310
Marleston SA 5033

Alternatively you can e-mail your comments to comic.admin@bigpond.com

Thank you.