



TIPS FOR FAMILIES, **FROM FAMILIES**

About Navigating Mental
Health Services



Breaking Barriers



Making Connections



Building Confidence



INTRODUCTION

The following tips and suggestions are about finding your way through complex mental health (and other health) systems and services as a parent, carer, family member or kin supporting a child or young person experiencing complex mental health challenges.

All these ideas came from parents, carers, families and kin who have been involved in the Resilience in Reach Project in some way. Although not all will be relevant or useful to you, we hope that many are... and that in some way they remind you that you are not on your own.

We welcome any further learnings you may have from your own experience that you would like to share. (See the end of this resource to find out how you can contribute to this list.)

TIPS FOR FAMILIES



Finding your way in the mental health system

- Knowing the system helps – find someone who knows the system and can help explain it.

Peer support

- Lived experience knowledge was really useful – peer workers often know strategies and resources that clinical staff don't know about.
- Sharing resources, sharing strategies with people who are going through similar experiences.

When things get difficult or crisis happens

- Stop, breathe.
- Assess the situation and regulate.
- What help is needed?
- Get help.
- What worked last time?
- Is a new approach needed?

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Appointments and communicating with mental health professionals

- When planning/preparing for appointments, try to keep a file/compendium of previous records, including medications, therapies, specialists, school reports, assessments etc. Keeping documents in one place can make it easier for you to take to the appointment. It is virtually impossible to keep a mental note of everything when treatment can last over many years.
- Talk to health professionals about communication – how you can all best communicate to understand what is happening for your child/young person and the family.
- Know that it is okay to ask questions – treatment, rights of families/carers/young people, legislation, frameworks.
- If you can, make arrangements for indefinite or ongoing referrals to mental health supports so you don't have to keep going back to the GP.
- "NO CALLER ID" might indicate a phone call from the public mental health system – sometimes.



TIPS FOR FAMILIES



Working out with the young person how to communicate their support needs to services (supporting young people's self-advocacy)

- Create a resource with your young person to help them tell their story the way they want to share it – what service providers need to know to help/support your child and why this information is important.
- Talk to your loved one when they are healthy about what to do if they experience psychosis again. (This is known as an Advance Health Directive for Mental Health)
- If your young person is over 18, and you are their main support and need to be involved in their care, you need a Nominated Support Person Authority. This must be nominated at every hospital admission – it doesn't last.
- I have a standby "letter of authority" from my over 18 child, signed by them for when they can't speak for themselves.

TIPS FOR FAMILIES



Finding out how mental services work and their framework for care

- We found out the hard way – we weren't told about any of the guidelines until I searched for the information myself. What are the protocols or frameworks clinicians are working from?
- If I had of known the process in advance, I would have looked into other ways to assist my child. Their 'guidelines' put us into a panic response which only added to the anxiety of my child.
- There is a need for more information about the type of 'care' that will be provided so that both parties have a clear understanding of the process.

When the police are involved

- You can add important information and details on your child/young person's police profile.

WANT TO CONTRIBUTE?



Are you a parent, carer, family member or kin of a child or young person who has experienced complex mental health challenges with valuable information or advice for other parents, carers, families, kin, or children and young people?

Is there anything you have learned from your experience that you would like to offer people going through something similar?

Would you like your ideas added to the Resilience in Reach resources for parents, carers, families and kin?

You can let us know your suggestions by sending them to us via email: info@raisingminds.org.au or via website [here](#).