

## **Planning to maintain contact with your children can help to reduce your stress levels while you are apart**

Planning is essential to get the best outcome for you and your children while you are in the mental health unit.

Mental Health Units are not always ideal environments for children to visit and there are some limits on who should visit and when.

Before your children visit, the staff will always need to make sure:

- the unit is safe for children to visit
- the children are happy to visit
- the person who brings the children is able to stay

Talk to the staff for hints on having a stress free visit.

Remember a phone call or letter to your children can be helpful when a visit is not practical.

### **HINTS FOR A STRESS FREE VISIT**

- short visits are not so tiring
- one or two visitors can be easier
- ask staff about family spaces in the unit and children's books and activities

## **Contacts**

Your local GP  
Lower North Shore Mental Health Service...9904 1700  
Ryde Acute Mental Health Service .....9858 7777  
LNS Parenting & Child Behaviour Team .....9448 3155  
Ryde Child & Adolescent Mental Health Service..9448 6877  
RNSH Child & Adolescent Psychiatry Team ....9926 8905  
ARAFMI (support for family and carers) .....9888 1819  
FAMI Club  
(Families Affected by Mental Illness).....8877 5283  
Carers NSW (also Young Carers NSW) ... 1800 242 636  
Tresillian (24hr Parent support line) .....9787 0855  
Parentline (24hr Parent support line)..... 13 20 55  
Centacare (local family support service).....9438 5400  
Ryde Family Support Service .....9334 0111  
NSW Domestic Violence Line..... 1800 656 463  
Family Relationships Advice Line ..... 1800 050 321  
DOCS Helpline (24hrs, 7 days)..... 13 21 11  
Lifeline ..... 13 11 14  
Kids Helpline ..... 1800 55 1800  
New Horizons .....9490 0029

### **WEBSITES**

#### **for parents**

[www.copmi.net.au](http://www.copmi.net.au)  
[www.parenting.nsw.gov.au](http://www.parenting.nsw.gov.au)  
[www.raisingchildren.net.au](http://www.raisingchildren.net.au)

#### **for carers**

[www.carersnsw.asn.au](http://www.carersnsw.asn.au) (also links to young carers website)  
[www.mentalhealth.asn.au](http://www.mentalhealth.asn.au)

#### **for children**

[www.headroom.net.au](http://www.headroom.net.au)  
[www.easternhealth.org.au/champs/](http://www.easternhealth.org.au/champs/)

#### **for young people**

[www.reachout.com.au](http://www.reachout.com.au)  
[www.headroom.net.au](http://www.headroom.net.au)

### **FURTHER INFORMATION**

*For more information contact the  
Mental Health Prevention Worker – Children of  
Parents with a mental illness on **9462 9222***

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# Tips for managing your parenting role during a mental health admission

*Parenting, Children & Mental Health*



**Health**  
Northern Sydney  
Local Health District

## Keeping Kids in Mind

***Being admitted to a Mental Health Unit is a stressful time for you and your family – especially if you are worried about how your family and your children will cope.***

***It is important to remember that this is a time for you to concentrate on getting well.***

***However, regular contact with your family and friends, including children, can sometimes help.***



## Some Things to Think About

As a parent, you may have concerns for your children while you are apart from them.

It is important that you discuss any concerns with the staff as soon as possible.

### Some things you may want to discuss with the staff:

- the caring arrangements or needs of your children
- ways to stay in touch with your children
- ways for your children to contact you
- helpful messages for your children about mental illness and hospital
- visiting times and tips for planning a happy visit

**Parents and children cope better when they talk about their worries and plan for their needs as a family**

## Your Children's Needs

**Children need to know that you love and are interested in them, even though you may be apart from them**

Some, but not all, children experience difficulties when their parent is apart from them. How children cope and what they understand depends on how old they are, what they have seen and heard and how much their routine has been disrupted.

All children cope better if:

- they have some understanding of what is happening
- they know who will look after them while you are in hospital
- they know they are not to blame and that you still love them
- their routines of school and social activities continue
- they have someone to talk to about their feelings
- they have a regular carer that knows them and their routines

