



Mental Health Carers
ARAFMI NSW Inc
Hunter Region

You Are Not Alone Support, Advocacy and Complaints

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Family and friends of a person suffering mental illness may experience a variety of feelings about the care and treatment being offered such as vulnerability, grief, frustration, anxiety and concern. Hunter New England Mental Health Services have a role in connecting family and friends to appropriate support options so that these feelings are acknowledged and incorporated into the overall care plan.

- Would you like to meet people going through similar experiences?
- Do you need to get a better understanding of what's going on with your loved one?
- Do you want to understand the hospital and community care system better?
- Do you need someone to help put across your point of view?
- Do you need help in making a complaint?

Non-government and Government organisations listed below can put you in touch with support groups and help explain what is happening to your loved one. They can help explain the hospital and community care systems, advocate on your behalf (help represent what you want to the authorities) and assist in making a formal or informal complaint. They are there for you when you just need someone to talk to.

Non-Government Organisations

Carer Assist

Contact details:

Armidale	6772 3211
Mayfield	4968 9268
Taree	6551 4333
Tamworth	6761 3222
Warialda	6729 1392

Email: infohne@carerassist.org.au

Carer Assist provides information, education, advocacy and support to carers and families of people with a mental illness. You can make



Health
Hunter New England
Local Health District

Navigators Guide

contact with one of their Carer Advocates at the numbers shown above.

Mental Health Carers ARAFMI Hunter

Contact details:

Admin 4961 2842
Support 4961 6717

Email: arafmihunter@exemail.com.au
www.arafmi.org

The Association of Relatives and Friends (of people with) Mental Illness provide telephone support, support groups, counselling, information, educational workshops and programs for carers and families of people with a mental illness in Newcastle, Lake Macquarie and Hunter Valley.

Carers NSW

Contact details:

Phone 9280 4744
Freecall 1800 242 636

Email: contact@carersnsw.org.au
www.carersnsw.org.au/

Carers NSW provide support, information and services for carers of people with a disability, mental illness, drug and alcohol dependencies, chronic condition, terminal illness or who are frail.

Government Organisations

EDuCARE Support Services

Contact details:

Phone 4921 4895
Freecall 1300 887 776

www.hnehealth.nsw.gov.au/educare_support/service

EDuCARE are part of Hunter New England Health. They provide support, education and services for carers of people suffering physical and mental health issues in Newcastle and Hunter Valley.



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Making a Complaint

There may be circumstances when you have received support but still feel unhappy with the care provided to your loved one. It may be necessary to seek further assistance for your family member within the health system by informally or formally representing concerns or complaints. The following information describes options for feedback of concerns and complaints as well as the role of Official Visitors who can be accessed by carers of people with a mental illness receiving hospital care.

In the first instance it is advisable to raise your concerns directly with clinicians involved in the care of your family member or friend. If you are not satisfied that your concerns have been addressed you can speak with a Consumer Consultant, Nurse Unit Manager for inpatient services or Service Manager/Team Leader for community based and specialist services. A **Clinical Review Meeting** may be convened to fully address these concerns, involving your participation.

If you feel your concerns about the treatment and care of your family member have not been adequately attended to, you may lodge a **formal complaint** to:

The General Manager

Hunter New England Mental Health
PO Box 833, Newcastle, NSW 2300

If your concerns are not satisfactorily resolved through the above avenues you may contact:

The Manager

Hunter New England Health Complaints
Locked Bag 1, New Lambton, NSW 2305
Phone 1800 605 172 (during business hours)

You can also contact or lodge a complaint to:

NSW Health Care Complaints Commission

Locked Mail Bag 18, Strawberry Hills, NSW 2012
Phone 1800 043 159

Hunter New England Mental Health has a policy of following up all complaints. Each complaint is dealt with seriously and fully investigated. You will receive feedback regarding the outcome of investigations into your concerns. It is important to note that making a complaint will not impact on the quality of care provided to your loved one.

If you would like assistance with communicating your concerns or a complaint, you may contact Carer Assist, ARAFMI, Carers NSW, EDuCARE or the Official Visitors. The following section briefly describes the role of Official Visitors.

Official Visitors

Official Visitors are appointed by the Minister for Health. They visit people in hospitals and people under community treatment orders who receive care from health care agencies such as community mental health services.

Official Visitors are independent from the health care system and come from a range of cultural, professional and personal backgrounds. They aim to safeguard standards of treatment and care, and the rights and dignity of people treated under the NSW Mental Health Act, while maintaining an independent perspective.

Official Visitors make regular visits, talk to patients and their relatives, inspect records and registers, report on the standard of facilities and services, liaise with staff about issues or concerns, and report any problems to the Principal Official Visitor and/or the Minister for Health. Official Visitors visit hospitals once a month and other health care agencies twice a year.

If you do not see an Official Visitor when they visit you can contact them:

Freecall 1800 208 218
(Weekdays 9am - 5pm)