

Young Carers

Young carers are children and young people who care for or help care within a family affected by the illness, disability, AOD or mental health issue of one or more of its members or friends. Carers Australia conservatively estimates that there are at least 388,000 young carers in Australia.²⁰ There are approximately 11,500 young carers in Canberra which accounts for 10% of the ACT's youth population²¹. Young carers may experience positive impacts of caring providing them with practical skills and a sense of responsibility that aid in the journey to independence and assist them throughout life. Young carers also report having stronger relationships with family members, greater sense of achievement, connectedness and feelings of fulfilment. However, young carers may also experience negative impacts of caring including financial hardship, exclusion from opportunities and activities, and an overall impact on the wellbeing of the young person and their families.

Young carers have historically been forgotten, ignored or excluded from processes, programs, services and supports. Workers may sometimes feel they lack the skills or resources to support a young person caring for a parent or family member. But it's everyone's responsibility to work to remove the barriers that exclude young carers from accessing the opportunities they deserve.

In this section you will find:

- Tips for workers by young carers;
- Youth specific carers services; and
- Resources including more services, information and a date for your diary.

Note: All services in this handbook are available to young carers.

The following sections also contain young carers resources: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, Alcohol and Other Drug, Art and Recreation, Counselling, Disability, Health and Sexual Health, Legal, Mental Health, Peak Body, Some Key Government Services, Youth Support and Youth Support in Secondary Schools.

Ways of Working

How I Want To Be Supported: Tips for Workers from Young Carers

The Youth Coalition and the Children of Parents with a Mental Illness Project developed this fact sheet from consultations with young people who have a parent with a mental illness or dual diagnosis. They were asked what messages they would like workers and other health professionals to be made aware of. We collated a range of their responses into the following key messages.

²⁰ Debbie Noble-Carr (2001) Young Carers Research Project, Carers Australia.

²¹ Youth Coalition of the ACT (2008) Young Carers Research.

Support me and my family

Young people want support to be available for both them and the members of their family.

“Have a family and an individual focus.”

We feel alone sometimes

When a parent has a mental illness or dual diagnosis, each member of the family can feel isolated. It is important to help connect each member of the family with appropriate support and to the community.

“The worst thing you can do to someone with a mental illness or drug problem is to make them feel different and left out.”

My parent’s illness affects me

Young people talked about how their parent’s mental illness or dual diagnosis affected them and the other members of the family. It can affect all aspects of life.

“[Looking at] my [school] marks you can tell where my mum wasn’t well. You can map it.”

Build skills and supports in the family

Young people called on workers to support building skills and supports systems within the family.

“Support the parent’s to support their kids.”

Help me find out what’s out there

Young people wanted support to find out what programs, services and supports are available in the community for them and their family. It is important for workers to keep up to date with supports and resources so that they can link up young people and their families.

“There needs to be a larger awareness of what services are out there.”

If I’m wary of you it may be because I’ve had my trust broken before

Young people discussed how they’d had their trust broken by adults in a range of positions of power and responsibility. These experiences sometimes had a profound and long-term impact on young people’s willingness to seek external support and information.

“This worker said, “Yeah, you can trust me”, and then I found out that they had told other people, and then it went around that everyone knew that I had a schizo mum. Then I was called schizo cause my mum was schizophrenic. They convinced me I could trust them. It screwed up everything for me.”

It’s hard seeing my parent like that

Young people talked about how difficult it was to see their parent unwell. They talked about how frightening these experiences were and how important it was for them to be informed and supported.

"It's pretty scary when you see your mum connected to machines, I was 14. You see that in movies and that is when people die. I didn't know what was happening. I was shocked and all sad."

Be flexible

Young people called on workers to be flexible and youth friendly in the way they work. They said they were more likely to engage and seek support if this happened.

"They'll arrange a meeting with you and if you're not comfortable they will go somewhere else."

Stigma hurts

Young people had many experiences to share about the negative impact of stigma on themselves, their parent and their family. They thought it was important for workers to challenge stereotypes and stigma.

"You get excluded because [the parents] have something wrong with them."

Take time to help me find practical solutions

Young people called on workers to work with them to identify practical and realistic solutions. They considered each family to be unique in their needs and solutions.

"I'd rather talk to someone face to face that can give me advice about my mum. You know, next time she does this, do that..."

It takes time

Most of the young people couldn't remember a time when their parents weren't unwell. It's important to recognise that this is a long-term issue potentially requiring long-term support.

"It took 6 years for my mum to be diagnosed with bipolar, 9 trips to the hospital and many pills later..."

Help me understand what is happening

Young people called on workers to support them to understand what was happening to their parent, to their family and to them.

"The worst is when you don't know what's going on or why a worker is doing something."

Services

CYCLOPS_{ACT}

Outreach service for young carers and their families.

Phone	(02) 6232 2432
Mailing Address	PO Box 287, Civic Sq ACT 2608
Email	cyclops@anglicarecg.org.au
Website	www.cyclopsact.org
Location	Cnr Cooyong St & Scotts Csg, Civic

Parent Organisation Anglicare Canberra and Goulburn

Who Can Access:

<i>Gender</i>	Females and males
<i>Age</i>	10 – 18
<i>Young people under the influence</i>	Case by case
<i>Income required</i>	No
<i>Disability access</i>	Yes
<i>Children of clients</i>	No

How to Access By phone, email and drop in, 9am – 5pm, Monday - Friday. A referral is required and young people can self refer.

Programs Provides information, advocacy, emergency relief, case management, school holiday programs, transport and referrals for young carers and their families. Various young carer support groups are run all over Canberra. Various activities are provided through the social activity program.

Families Works directly with families to provide support.

CYCLOPS_{ACT} Litmus Program

Outreach service for young carers who are caring for a parent with a mental illness.

Phone	(02) 6232 2432
Mailing Address	PO Box 287, Civic Square ACT 2608
Email	litmus@anglicarecg.org.au
Website	www.anglicarecg.org.au
Location	Cnr Cooyong & Scotts Crossing, Civic
Parent Organisation	Anglicare Canberra and Goulburn

Who Can Access:

<i>Gender</i>	Females and Males
<i>Age</i>	10 - 18
<i>Young people under the influence</i>	Case by case
<i>Income required</i>	No
<i>Disability access</i>	Yes
<i>Children of clients</i>	Yes

How to Access By phone or email, 9am – 5pm, Monday – Friday. A referral is required and young people or families can self refer.

Programs Provides information, advocacy, case management, brokerage, referrals and support to young carers who are caring for a parent with a mental illness. Support and social recovery groups are available.

Families Works directly with families to provide support.

Young Carers Program

Support service for young carers and their families.

Phone	(02) 6296 9900
Mailing Address	Suite 5, Ground Floor Churches Centre, Benjamin Way, Belconnen ACT 2607
Email	youngcarers@carersact.asn.au
Website	www.carersact.asn.au
Location	Suite 5, Ground Floor Churches Centre, Benjamin Way, Belconnen
Parent Organisation	Carers ACT

Who Can Access:

<i>Gender</i>	Females and males
<i>Age</i>	Up to 25 years
<i>Young people under the influence</i>	Information and referral provided
<i>Income required</i>	No
<i>Disability access</i>	Yes
<i>Children of clients</i>	Yes

How to Access By phone or email 9am – 5pm, Monday - Friday. No referral necessary.

Programs Provides respite, information, support and referrals for young carers. Flexible and individualised supports provided include counselling, advocacy, financial support to help young carers to complete schooling, and in home support for the relative they are caring for. Information and referral program, as well as flexible respite options for young carers at risk of not completing their education are available.

Other Young people accessing the program can also access Carers ACT.

Families Works directly with families to provide support.

St. Nicholas' Young Carers Program

Provides social and recreational camps for young carers.

Phone	(02) 6121 2955
Mailing Address	PO Box 642, Mawson ACT 2607
Email	therese.haywood@stvincanb.com.au
Website	www.stvincanb.com.au
Location	17-19 Colbee Court, Phillip
Parent Organisation	St. Vincent De Paul

Who Can Access:

<i>Gender</i>	Females and males
<i>Age</i>	9 – 15
<i>Young people under the influence</i>	Case by case
<i>Income required</i>	No
<i>Disability access</i>	Yes, for activities. No, for office.
<i>Children of clients</i>	No

How to Access	By phone, email and drop in, 9am – 5pm, Monday - Friday. A referral is necessary and young people can self refer.
Programs	Provides information, advocacy, emergency relief and referrals to support young people caring for a friend/family member with a mental illness or disability. Various groups and social and recreational activities are available. Camps are run in January and July during school holidays.
Families	Can provide referrals and extra support for families.

The following services also provide young carers programs:

- ☐ CCCares (Alternative Education)
- ☐ FACES (Family)
- ☐ Junction Youth Health Services (Health and Sexual Health)
- ☐ Learning For Life Program (Youth Support)
- ☐ Open Family Australia (Youth Support)
- ☐ Winnunga Nimmityjah Aboriginal Health Services (Health and Sexual Health)
- ☐ Youth Law ACT (Legal)
- ☐ See also the Youth Centres section

Resources

More Services

Directory - The Coloured Kit

For further information about young carer resources in the ACT order or download a copy of *The Coloured Kit* – Support Services and Resource Section. Available from the Youth Coalition of the ACT. Published 2007.

Phone: (02) 6247 3540

Web: www.youthcoalition.net

ACT Junior Secondary Bursary Scheme

Provides assistance to low-income earners in the ACT with dependent full-time students aged 14 or 15 years.

Phone: (02) 6205 9300

Web: www.det.act.gov.au/services/JSBS.htm

Location: 186 Reed Street, Greenway

Association for the Welfare of Child Health ACT

Aims to develop well-informed attitudes to the non-medical needs of sick or disabled children and adolescents and their families. Has a database of support groups for families with children with a chronic condition, syndrome or disability.

Phone: (02) 6288 6119

Email: Sue.Packer@act.gov.au

Carer Advisory Service

Carers ACT

For information, referral, advocacy, problem solving, developing options, counselling appointments and workshops.

Phone: 1800 242 636

Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) Carers Program

Carers ACT

Provides supports and facilitates access to services for Carers from non-English speaking backgrounds.

Phone: (02) 6296 9915

Grandparents Support Network

Marymead Child and Family Centre

A support and education group for grandparents raising grandchildren.

Email: grandparents@marymead.org.au

Web: www.grandparents.org.au

Location: 255 Goyder St, Narrabundah

Hidden Corners Young Carers Theatre

CYCLOPS_{ACT}, Anglicare Canberra and Goulburn

A theatre company that makes work by and about young carers. The free weekly workshops are open to any young carers who want to express themselves, have fun and share their experiences with other young people who've gone through similar things.

Phone: (02) 6232 2432

Email: hidden.corners@anglicarecg.org.au

Indigenous Carer Program

Carers ACT

Provides supports and services to Indigenous Carers in our community.

Phone: (02) 6296 9924

Young Carers Network

Aims to support networking and linkages of services seeking to better support young carers and their families in the ACT.

Phone: (02) 6296 9938

Email: nataliet@carersact.asn.au

More Information

The Coloured Kit

Youth Coalition of the ACT and the Children of Parents with a Mental Illness Project, Mental Health ACT

The Coloured Kit aims to support young people and their families affected by mental illness / dual diagnosis (mental illness and alcohol and other drug issues) develop a care plan. It is an ACT specific resource with heaps of up-to-date resources and services.

Web: www.youthcoalition.net or www.health.act.gov.au

Carers Resources

Carers Australia

The following resources are just some of the information sheets that are available for carers: Taking care of yourself, Feelings, Taking a break, Services for you, Safety at home, Loss and Grief, and many more. Available in Arabic, Italian, Chinese, Maltese, Croatian, Polish, Dutch, Serbian, German, Spanish, Greek, Vietnamese & Hungarian. Also available in large print and audio cassette versions.

Web: www.carersaustralia.com.au

Centrelink – Carers

For enquiries about services and payments for carers.

Phone: 13 27 17

Health Matters

Australian Broadcasting Corporation

Aims to present engaging, credible, evidence-based health information with a strong consumer focus.

Web: www.abc.net.au/health

HealthInsite

Australian Government

Provides a wide range of up-to-date and quality assessed information on important health topics such as diabetes, cancer, mental health and asthma.

Web: www.healthinsite.gov.au

Reading, Writing and Responsibility: Young Carers and Education

Institute of Child Protection Studies

The purpose of the report is to develop an understanding of the needs and experiences of young carers in education, and to inform the development of school-based supports for young carers and their teachers. Published 2006.

Web: www.acu.edu.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0005/47678/RW_and_R-YoungCarersEducation.pdf

Date For Your Diary

18 – 23 October 2009

Carers Week

A national awareness week held across Australia during October each year.

Web: www.carersaustralia.com.au