



ARAFMI ILLAWARRA

Caring for Carers

Mental Health Carers ARAFMI Illawarra

1 Atchison Street Wollongong,
www.arafmiillawarra.org.au
arafmi_i@bigpond.net.au
Inquiries Office Ph: 4254 1699

Vision

Our Vision is for a community that understands and responds to the impact of mental illness on families, relatives and friends.

Purpose

United by our shared experiences, we provide a voice and a range of services for families, relatives and friends of people with a mental illness throughout the Illawarra.

Objectives

- To provide appropriate flexible and a variety of services that respond to the changing needs of carers in the Illawarra
- To provide verbal and written information about mental illness and appropriate services.
- To work in partnership with allied services to improve family sensitive practice
- To work in partnership with other services to provide community education and information
- To increase knowledge of information of mental illness within the community
- To decrease the prevalence of myths and misconceptions about mental illness
- To increase the awareness of the impact of mental illness on carers
- To carry out service evaluation and respond accordingly to the needs of carers and family members to ensure that services are appropriate
- To assist carers and families to increase their knowledge of the rights of carers and consumers

The Aims of Mental Health Carers ARAFMI Illawarra

1. By providing sensitive support, ARAFMI Illawarra aims to help families that are in stress or in shock particularly on a first diagnosis of mental ill health in the family
2. ARAFMI refers families to appropriate professional services and advises carers and families on how to gain admission to hospital for the person with mental illness
3. ARAFMI assists families to reduce their social isolation by encouraging them to meet other families and to learn and discuss their mutual problems in confidence, and to realise that a family under stress in which there is mental illness is not alone.
4. ARAFMI Illawarra recognises the needs that families have for information on mental health, and for education necessary for families and carers to help the person with a mental illness. ARAFMI arranges such education with professional mental health workers
5. ARAFMI Illawarra regards its newsletter as invaluable means of disseminating information regularly to individual and professional members of the Association on local and state-wide events and items of topical interest
6. Through courses in coping Skills for families, and by sensitive and confidential discussion with other families, ARAFMI Illawarra aims to enhance their capacity to care for the person with mental illness without that role being detrimental to their personal and family functioning
7. By forming close ties with mental health and other medical services. ARAFMI Illawarra endeavours to achieve a better understanding by those services of the problems, wishes and aspirations that carers and families have for their own lives and for lives of those for whom they care for
8. ARAFMI Illawarra together with Illawarra Mental Health Service, likeminded services and other stakeholders endeavours to give the community an understanding of mental ill health and to alleviate the stigma suffered by people with mental ill health and their families
9. ARAFMI Illawarra aims to help Illawarra Health to promote better mental health of the community

Support Groups and Programs

General Carer Support Group

A support group for carers who support a friend or family member living with a mental illness, who want to gain strategies around positive caring. This group is about friendship, peer support and understanding. We also provide education and community awareness such as guest speakers through this group. An agenda is available.

Venue: South Coast Private Hospital (Hyams Room)

112 Burelli Street

Wollongong

When: Thursday evenings

Time: 6.30pm (Excluding last Thursday of month which is a carer social activity)



Social Group for Carers

ARAFMI Illawarra has been fortunate enough to receive funding to facilitate a new Carer Recreation Programme. This is a wonderful opportunity for Carers caring for someone living with a mental illness to get together through Social Connectedness, Coffee, Lunch and / or activities.

The programme is social based giving carers and opportunity to:

- **Form new friendships.**
- **Have some ‘Me’ time to care for your own social and emotional wellbeing.**
- **Meet other carers to share stories and experiences as your role as a carer.**
- **Be repaid for your invaluable contribution to the community.**
- **Enjoy free or discounted meals and activities.**

These groups are held periodically and at various locations. A monthly agenda is available. Some out of hours activities available for our working carers.

My Sanctuary Therapeutic Support Group

My Sanctuary provides support for those caring for a loved one with Borderline Personality Disorder. This group is held on the first Tuesday and third Thursday of every month.

Tuesday Carers Coping Skills group:

- Psycho-education
- Information about services
- Skills Learning
- Coping techniques
- Peer Support
- Emotional support and a place to share

Venue: South Coast Private Hospital (Hyams Room)
112 Burelli Street

When: 1st Tuesday of the Month

Time: 5.30pm– 7.30pm



My Sanctuary Coffee Chat group:

A support group for carers who support a loved one living with BPD and other Personality Disorder's. The group focuses on carers own wellbeing and peer support.

- Peer support
- Advice and lived experiences from other carers
- Relaxation
- Sharing
- A time for yourself
- Coffee and Cake

Venue: Illawarra Leagues Club

The Café

When: 3rd Thursday of the Month

Time: 10.00am– 12.00pm

Me and My Relationships Program.

What is it?

A 12 week group program aims to assist carers to overcome interpersonal problems and build stronger and healthier relationships with others. Participants in this program will learn a range of skills that can increase their capacity and willingness to experience rather than avoid unpleasant thoughts and emotions, in order to experience healthier relationships and live life in the way that they value.

Who is this program suited for?

This program is suited to anyone who experiences ongoing difficulties and distress related to their caring role, for example those experiencing strong emotions or using unhelpful coping strategies.

What does it involve?

Education and skill building. There are set topics that will be covered each week & particular activities we will do.

Venue: ARAFMI Illawarra, 1 Atchison Street Wollongong

When: Held periodically throughout the year. Contact Kelly or Samara to register your interest for the next group.



Family Connections Program

A 12-week Free Program

****Education *Skills *Resources *Support to provide the foundation for a better understanding of this complex disorder***

The Family Connections program is designed to provide parents, spouses, adult children, and siblings the knowledge and skills that will be helpful to them for their own wellbeing in living with a relative with Borderline Personality Disorder (BPD). The program also helps those relatives build a support network with other individuals with a relative with BPD.

FRAMEWORK of the PROGRAM

The course content of Family Connections was developed by two practicing clinician / researchers and modified in consultation with family members and consumers.

The format of the sessions allows group participants to obtain the latest information about the disorder, acquire and practice skills, and enjoy an open and supportive forum for discussion.

The program combines the real-life experiences and needs of families of persons with BPD with the expertise of more than two decades of professional work with families.

Group leaders, who are family members or clinicians, have extensive personal experience in this area and have taken an intensive leader training course to give them the tools to disseminate information and teach the key skills of the program.

COURSE CONTENT

Series offers

- * Education on BPD
- * Research on BPD
- * Skills training based on Dialectical Behaviour Therapy (DBT) in a supportive group environment
- * Application and practice of skills
- * Development of a support network

Topics addressed

- * Education and Research on BPD
- * Family Perspectives and Experiences
- * Relationship Mindfulness Skills
- * Family Environment Skills
- * Effective Communication Skills
- * Validation Skills
- * Problem Management Skills



Venue: ARAFMI Illawarra, 1 Atchison Street Wollongong

When: Held periodically throughout the year. Contact Toni or Samara to register your interest for the next group.



Carer Check-Up

What it is

The Carer Check Up is a brief structured intervention that aims to assist carers navigate the various support services on offer through the assessment and provision of individualised feedback. What a carer can expect after completing the Carer Check Up is an increased awareness about his/her current circumstances and impact it is having on him/her, increased knowledge about the ways he/she can support themselves and their loved one, and a clear understanding of what support options are on offer that specifically match to his/her individual needs.

How it works

The Carer Check Up is run over three weekly one hour sessions. For the first session a carer will be asked to discuss his/her circumstances with a support worker who will listen empathetically, as well as complete several assessment questionnaires that will be used for the provision of individualised feedback. For the second session a carer will be provided personalised feedback about his/her circumstances, informed of ways he/she can best support themselves and loved one, and given an opportunity to identify a support option that matches up with his/her needs. The final session is a chance to discuss progress in addressing needs and planning for the future.

How to get involved

If you are interested in arranging a time to undertake the Carer Check Up, or simply wish to know a bit more about it, you can speak to one of the support workers at ARAFMI by calling (02) 4254 1699 or stopping by at the office located at 1 Atchison St, Wollongong.



Face to Face and Telephone Support

Mental Health Carers ARAFMI Illawarra also can provide carers with one on one support and Telephone support. Our team at ARAFMI offers carers a safe place to discuss their situation and to receive support, referrals and advice in a non judgemental environment. Carers often say that they dont feel so alone after they receive support from our team at ARAFMI.

Planning for the Future

Legal arrangements you need to know about for **carers and their families**



Everything you need to know about

- Powers of Attorney
- Enduring guardianship
- Elder financial abuse
- *Wills*

- Are you worried about what will happen to your loved ones when you are no longer able to care for them?
- Do you know where to get advice and/or information
- ARAFMI Illawarra and Legal Aid NSW will be hosting a free legal workshop for Carers and families.

*Mental Health Carers ARAFMI Illawarra host a 2 hour Legal workshop, these workshops for carers and their families are held periodically throughout the year, if you would like to know more about this workshop or to express your interest in attending our next session **please contact ARAFMI on 4254 12699***



Mental Health First Aid for a Suicidal Person (persons with suicidal ideation) - which includes the development of a Suicide Safety Plan.

Learning outcomes of the course include:

- Understanding accurate information about suicide rates and risk factors in the Australian context.
- Reviewing the first aid guidelines of how to intervene when someone is experiencing suicidal thoughts and behaviours
- Practicing these skills in a safe environment.

Please note this course is not recommended for individuals recently bereaved by suicide. Other specific postvention support services can be found at the beyond blue website.

It is short skills based training course - it is also not part of an ongoing therapy or support group.

Course Format

This course consists of 4-hours of face-to-face training. Course participants receive a Handbook and a digital Certificate of Completion when they submit online feedback.

Who can attend a course

Any interested adult can attend - to learn how to give appropriate first aid to someone who is experiencing suicidal thoughts.

The course complements the 12-hour Standard MHFA course, Blended MHFA Courses and the 14-hour Youth MHFA course.

*This workshop for carers and families is held periodically throughout the year, if you would like to know more about this workshop or to express your interest in attending our next session **please contact ARAFMI on 4254 12699***

