

## Rights and Responsibilities of Carers and Advocates

THIS STATEMENT ACKNOWLEDGES the capabilities of non-professional carers and advocates. It recognises the contribution they make to the support and care of people with mental health problems and mental disorders. In the majority of cases the caring role is assumed by women. The caring and advocacy roles are complex and the relationship between carers, consumers and advocates can change frequently. It may also vary according to the age of the consumer. There are many issues that arise for people living with, caring for, or acting as an advocate for people with mental health problems or mental disorders.

Ⓢ Carers & advocates have a right to respect for individual human worth, dignity and privacy.

Ⓢ Carers & advocates have a right to comprehensive information, education, training and support to facilitate the understanding, advocacy and care of those consumers they care for.

Ⓢ With the consent of the consumer, carers and advocates are entitled to:

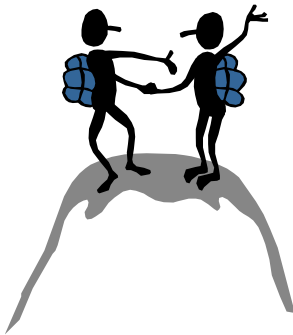
- have access to the consumer;
- be consulted by service providers about measures under consideration for treatment of the consumer or for his or her welfare;
- arrange support services such as respite care, counselling and community nursing facilities;
- exchange information with those providing treatment concerning the consumer's lifestyles and their relationships with others.



There may be circumstances where the consumer is unable to give consent or may refuse consent because of their disturbed mental state. In such cases it may be appropriate for service providers, carers and/or

advocates to initiate contact and involve those who may be able to assist

- Ⓢ Carers & advocates have the right to put information concerning family relationships and any matters relating to the mental state of the consumer to health service providers.
- Ⓢ Carers & advocates have a right to seek further opinions regarding the diagnosis and care of the consumer.
- Ⓢ Carers & advocates have a right to place limits on their availability to consumers.
- Ⓢ Carers & advocates have a right to mechanisms of complaint and redress.
- Ⓢ Carers & advocates have a right to help with their own difficulties which may be generated by the process of caring for or acting as an advocate for a person with a mental health problem or mental disorder.



- Ⓢ Carers & advocates have a responsibility to:
  - respect the human worth and dignity of the person who has a mental health problem or mental disorder;
  - consider the opinions of professional and other staff and recognise their skills in providing care and treatment for the person who has a mental health problem or mental disorder; and;
  - co-operate, as far as is possible, with reasonable programs of treatment and care aimed at returning the consumer to optimal and personal autonomy.
- Ⓢ The parent/guardian/carer of a child or adolescent has a responsibility to obtain appropriate professional assistance if they have reason to believe that the child may have a mental health problem or mental disorder.