

Carers rights

As a carer I have only three statutory rights:

1. I am entitled to a Carer's Assessment, even if the person I care for does not wish to engage with services.
2. I am entitled to my own care plan.
3. It is a requirement that I am told that I am entitled to a Carers' Assessment.

BUT the following is an informal charter which we could all refer to in times of need and which has been adapted from the code of family rights approved by the New Zealand Schizophrenia Fellowship's National Council 1998.

As a carer I can expect to:

- Be taken seriously when expressing concerns.
- Be treated with understanding and respect.
- Be informed on the range of relevant services and support available.
- Be afforded a rapid response in an emergency situation.
- Be provided information if this is in the best interest of the patient and other members of the family.
- Be informed about a relative's illness, the diagnosis, treatment and possible side-effects of the treatment.
- Be included in a family-centred approach to treatment and support.
- Be included in care-planning, implementation and review.
- Be helped with problems created or exacerbated by caring for a relative with a mental illness.
- Know the names of other members of the care-giving team.
- Be offered culturally accepted treatment options which are inclusive of the family.
- Seek other opinions regarding the diagnosis and treatment of a relative.
- Be informed of mechanisms of complaint and redress.
- Be consulted about a relative's discharge plan.
- Receive a mental health service that recognises the need for families to participate in shaping the service and invites families to take part in service planning, implementation and evaluation.
- Be encouraged to take time out when required, to prevent 'burnout' or to cope with stress.

(Adapted from the New Zealand Schizophrenia Fellowship's National Council. World Schizophrenia Fellowship Newsletter, Fourth Quarter, 1998).

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