



BCSS Victoria Branch Families' Resource Booklet

Support

Crisis

Diagnosis & Medication

Advocacy

Compiled Jan 2000 by BCSS Volunteers & Staff

Updated July 2008

Contents

SUPPORT

Psychological.....	4
Educational.....	4
Financial.....	4
Housing.....	5

CRISIS

Suicide.....	7
Ministry of Children & Family Intervention.....	7
Personal Danger.....	7
Stress.....	8
Criminal Involvement.....	8
Emergency Intervention.....	9

DIAGNOSIS & MEDICATION

Getting a Diagnosis.....	11
Strange Behaviour.....	11
Refusal to Take Medication.....	11
Refusal to Go to a Psychiatrist.....	12
Unable to Get Information.....	12

ADVOCACY ¹

Prescription Coverage (Pharmacare).....	14
Prescription Coverage (Private Insurance).....	15
Appeal is Rejected.....	15

¹ Information for this chapter was taken from the booklet *Advocating for Access to Treatment*

SUPPORT

How can I get my son into a group therapy program?

- 1) You can get a referral through his G.P., his psychiatrist or a Medical Clinic.
- 2) You can talk to his case manager.
- 3) Talk to the Victoria Mental Health Services at 370-8175
- 4) EMP Day Hospital. You will also need a referral through the psychiatrist or G.P.
Day Hospital contact: Drew Barnes at 370-8126.

My son needs help going back to school. What programs are there?

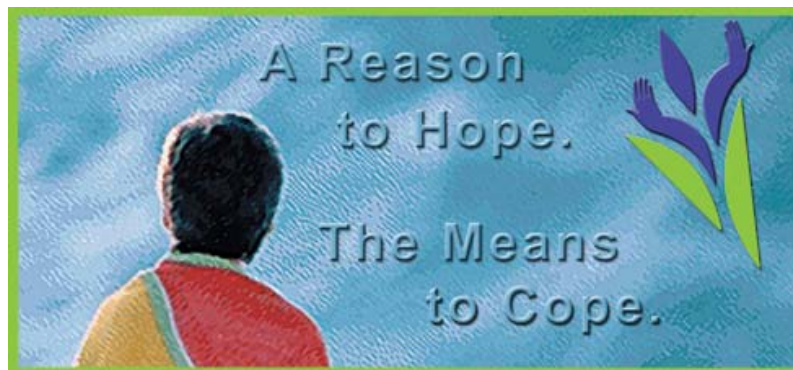
- 1) Contact Capital Mental Health Association at 389-1211 for all programs.
Education Coach: Will Gordon Networks: Pat Valks Grow Program: Sabine Vanderispailie
- 2) Phone Camosun College at 370-3325) and SJ Willis School at 360-4321, both have upgrading to grade 12. He may be able to receive help paying for post-secondary classes through the College and possibly through the BCSS, Victoria Branch Memorial Fund or the Consumer Initiative Fund through the REES Network (595-8619).
- 3) Individual Learning Centre through School District 63. Individualized self-paced learning, for ages over 14 and adult learners. Grades 9-12 courses. No fees for non-graduated students; bus passes available. In Saanich 744-1174 and Sidney 656-1104. Check out their web-site: www.sd63.bc.ca
- 4) Encourage caller to pass information on to FAMILY member so the individual can take some responsibility for arrangements (Also contact previous educational institution).

My son has no money... How can I get him on Gain or disability?

- 1) Go to the Ministry of Housing and Social Development office at 771 Vernon Ave., (they won't mail forms). Ask to see an Employment Assistance Worker (EAW) and ask for "Persons With Disability" application forms. Photocopy them so you have a working copy. Emergency funds are available but only if you ask for an "emergency needs assessment" and emphasize that the person faces risk to their health if they don't get assistance.
- 2) You can get help from trained advocates from Together Against Poverty Society at 361-3521 and Action Committee of People with Disabilities at 383-4105. Another resource is the Disability Resource Centre at 595-0044.
- 3) Talk to his case manager. Call Schizophrenia Services at 370-8158 if you don't know who his case manager is.
- 4) If he is in the EMP, contact the ward social worker who can help if he is being evicted or if his benefits have been suspended. Ward phone numbers: PIC (Step down unit) 370-8336
4B 370-8598 pgr. 389-7004 4A: 370-8337 3B: 370-8385

My daughter is going to be released from EMP. She has no place to go and she can't live with me. What can I do?

- 1) Make sure that there is a Hospital Discharge plan in place with overall coordination of the plan being the responsibility of the case manager, BEFORE she is released. Ask to be involved in the Discharge Plan Conference.
- 2) Make sure you know the name and cell phone number of the case worker in charge of your daughter's case.
- 3) See Hospital Discharge Planning Form.
- 4) Talk to Kristy Wall at Pacifica Housing (VIHA Funded) 356-2548.
- 5) Emergency Shelters:
 - a) Street Link: 383-1951 will take men and women in for up to 3 weeks while they look for housing.
 - b) Salvation Army: 384-3396 picture ID or SIN needed if possible. They have separate rooms for men only.
 - c) The YM/YWCA: 386-7511 up to age 19 will assist with housing.
 - d) Hill House: 479-3963 for women
 - e) Sandy Merriman House: 480-1408 Cool Aid Society run, for women only.
- 6) If you as a family member or care giver provide housing, the system will not provide housing, the system will not deal with the situation.



CRISIS

How do I get help for a suicidal individual?

- 1) Call the NEED Crisis Line at 386-6323 between 1:00pm to 12:00 midnight; they will contact the Emergency Mental Health Team, who will contact you. Tell them it's a mental health emergency. Be prepared to answer questions about the situation, such as circumstances and location.
- 2) If it is an extreme emergency call 911, and SAY, "*This is a mental health emergency.*"
- 3) Go to Emergency at the Royal Jubilee Hospital (NOT Vic. General). From there, people can be sent to the new Psychiatric Emergency Centre (Archie Courtneall Centre) for assessment.
- 4) If appropriate, offer to call NEED Crisis Line 386-6323 or (911) for the individual.

They are trying to remove my children. They say I'm too sick to look after them. What can I do?

- 1) Discuss the situation with your psychiatrist/G.P.
- 2) Talk to your Mental Health Worker (Case Manager/Social Worker.
- 3) Contact Legal Aid at 388-4516.
- 4) Contact Community Living Services at 952-4203.
- 5) UVIC Faculty of Law Legal Info Office at 721-8158.
- 6) There is a legal obligation to contact the Ministry for Children & Family Services if you feel children may be in danger.

She is threatening me... What should I do?

- 1) Call the police at 911 and tell them your relative is in urgent need of medical attention and it is a mental health issue.
- 2) Give them the diagnosis if known.
- 3) State what the person is doing and that you need help getting them to the hospital.
- 4) Make sure you are SAFE...LEAVE the house if necessary.
- 5) Call the NEED crisis line: 386-6323. Tell them you are a family member and what the current situation is. Ask for the Emergency Mental Health team.
- 6) Keep a record of what has happened. What was said, done, etc, by the individual.
- 7) Inform individual's psychiatrist of THREATS and send a letter to psychiatrist documenting incidents as soon as possible

NOTE: Offer to call the police at 911 for the person.

I can't cope any longer...What can I do?

- 1) Call Victoria Mental Health Services at 370-8175 and ask for emergency (crisis) counselling...the Urgent Short Term Assessment & Treatment Team. Wait list of several weeks.
- 2) Request services of the Respite Program from either BCSS or VIHA.
- 3) BCSS: support and information is available at the office-941 Kings Road at 384-4225.
- 4) Family Counselling (funded by VIHA): call BCSS Victoria Branch at 384-4225.
- 5) Refer to a support group: phone BCSS, Victoria for information at 384-4225.
- 6) Enroll in the Family Peer Support Program at BCSS, Victoria Branch at 384-4225.
- 7) Sign up for Strengthening Families Together Education Course at BCSS Victoria Branch at 384-4225.
- 8) Consider talking to the chaplain/minister of your church.
- 9) VIHA Client Concerns at 370-8323.

My son was arrested for shoplifting (he is off his medication). What can I do?

- 1) He will probably be charged and released for a minor offense.
- 2) Contact: His case manager
Youth Forensics Court Liaison worker (Mon-Fri)
Developmental Disability Team at 479-7005
Legal Aid at 388-4516 747 Fort Street, 9am-2:30pm
Legal Information Clinic (UVIC Law faculty) (721-8158)
- 3) To find a lawyer who helps people with mental illness, call the Lawyer Referral Service 1(800)-663-1919.
- 4) VIHA Client Relations Office (any concerns regarding their health care experiences) at 370-8323. (Mon-Fri 8am-4pm).
- 5) Freedom of information and Privacy issues call 370-8043.

How can I access the Emergency Mental Health Response Team?

- 1) Call the Need Crisis Line at 386-6223 or the police at 911. The Emergency Response Team hours are 1:00pm to midnight.
- 2) Tell them “This is a Mental Health Emergency.”
- 3) Try to have as much documented information as possible, including historical incidents, behaviors, uttered threats etc.



**DIAGNOSIS
&
MEDICATION**

My Doctor doesn't think my loved one is really ill, he thinks he/she will, "grow out of it." How can I get a diagnosis?

- 1) Send your G.P. a letter documenting your concerns, outlining the behavior, signs and symptoms you have observed. Keep a copy of all letters you send.
- 2) If this doesn't work, ask your G.P. for a referral to Schizophrenia Services or the Urgent Psychiatric Clinic (USTAT). Clients must be referred by a medical doctor. USTAT intake is during business hours.
- 3) If this doesn't work, go directly to a walk-in clinic and ask for a referral from them.
- 4) In an emergency take your loved one to the Psychiatric Emergency Centre (Archie Courtnall Centre) at the Royal Jubilee Hospital.

My friend is behaving strangely. Could it be Schizophrenia? How can I find out? What should I do?

- 1) Educate yourself. Information is available at the BCSS, Victoria resource library located at 941 Kings Road. The library has many videos and over 100 books. Also check the BCSS website: www.bcssvictoria.ca. You can also get fact sheets and information tool kits mailed to you. Call Canadian Mental Health toll free: 1-800-661-2121.
- 2) Try to get the individual to their G.P. Let the doctor know the symptoms you have OBSERVED... Document your concerns in a letter and keep a copy for yourself.
- 3) You can go to Emergency at Royal Jubilee Hospital or call 370-8111 ask for "team."

My ill daughter won't take her prescribed medications. What can I do?

- 1) Talk to her in a non-threatening calm manner and ask for reasons why she doesn't want to take her medication.
- 2) Ask her if she knows that the earlier the disease is treated the better the outcome.
- 3) Supply her with written information about her medications. Keep a copy for yourself.
- 4) Suggest that a friend who she trusts discuss with her the importance of medication.
- 5) Contact G.P./Psychiatrist & inform them of what's going on and also follow up in writing.

I can't get my son to the psychiatrist...What can I do?

- 1) Talk to your son's G.P. and follow up with a letter (keep a copy for yourself) describing symptoms/behavior you have observed. You need a referral from a GP to gain access to Mental Health & Addictions Services.
- 2) If your son has a case manager, let him/her know, either by phone or letter (keep a copy for yourself). All letters should be cc'd to your son's G.P. and psychiatrist.
- 3) Contact (may be done through a case manager) the psychiatrist to let him/her know you are aware the appointment wasn't kept. Follow-up with a letter outlining the individual's behaviour.
- 4) Try to maintain open communication with your son. If one was written, refer to the Care plan agreement made with them when your son was well.

The psychiatrist and case manager say my son is an adult, and they can't discuss his situation with me. How can I get information?

- 1) Remember that adults have a legal right to privacy.
- 2) Try to obtain written consent from your adult child to release their medical information to you. Assure them that the consent is not indefinite; it has an expiry date. If possible, enlist the assistance of the case manager.
- 3) Visit the hospital and establish open communication with the staff assigned to care for your loved one. Point out, (diplomatically) that as the family is the primary caregiver, it is vital that you have information about his condition.
- 4) Send a letter and keep a copy for yourself to your son's case manager outlining your concerns. Cc the psychiatrist and GP (if one was involved), as well as to the ward head.
- 5) If still not successful, appeal to Client Concerns, at Mental Health & Addictions Services at 370-8323. (Mon-Wed-Fri).
- 6) According to the Mental Health Act you can apply for certain information under the Freedom of Information Act. Copies of the 2005 Guide to the BC Mental Health Act are available at BCSS, Victoria Branch and are also available on the BCSS, Victoria Branch website: www.bcssvictoria.ca
- 7) Case Managers can access some info but they can't release it without written consent from their client. There is an exception, however, under the Freedom of Information and Privacy Protection Act, see section 33.2 a & d.

ADVOCACY

The medication prescribed for my loved one is not covered by BC Medical. What can I do?

- 1) Write a letter to BC Medical: Letter writing is probably one of the most effective and efficient ways to express your opinions about an issue or concern.
- 2) Meet your local Political representative in person: The most effective “advocate” you have is your local MP or MLA. The best way to bring this issue to their attention is to set up a face-to-face meeting.
- 3) Telephone calls are another effective to local MLA’s are a means of getting your concern heard.
- 4) Media: Local newspapers, radio and television stations will offer publicity for an issue if they are convinced it merits attention. Letters to the editor of your daily or weekly newspaper are also effective.

Contact Information

- 1) Call Inquiry BC for more information about your Provincial MLA: 1-800-387-6121, or check out the MLA locator website at: www.legis.gov.bc.ca/mla/3-1-1.htm
- 2) Call: 1-800-622-6232 for information regarding your Federal MP, or check out the website at www.canada.gc.ca
- 3) Call BCSS Victoria for the *Advocating for Access to Treatment* pamphlet. (384-4225), also available on our website www.bcssvictoria.ca under the links page.
- 4) Pharmacare: 663-2100 option 6 then 5.

My son's medication is not covered by my workplace insurance policy. How can I get them to cover his prescription?

If an Insurance company will not cover the cost of a prescription medication your son has been prescribed, here are the steps you can follow:

- 1) Call the Benefits department of the insurance company and make sure you have the following information:
 - Benefits policy number
 - Employers name
 - The drug identification number (DIN) of the medicine of the prescription. If the medication is not covered by the plan, ask the insurance company why they will not cover it. Request their reasons in writing.
- 2) Let the Human Resources representative at his work know what the insurance company told you in written form. Find out if the lack of coverage is the decision of the insurance company or if it is excluded by the plan your employer has purchased. Explain your situation and have him/her contact the insurance company.
- 3) If your employer has purchased a drug plan that does not cover your prescribed medication, ask to have the drug covered in writing. They have the option of making an exception for this medication in this instance.
- 4) If it is the decision of the insurance company not to cover the drug, you can have your physician write a letter of appeal.

My doctor's appeal to the Insurance Company was rejected. Now what?

- 1) Contact the Insurance Company's ombudsman, or the equivalent, to file a complaint and request a review and a reversal of the decision.
- 2) If you are part of a family support group, ask if others have had a similar experience to yours and what they did.