

## Strong Bonds Fact Sheet:

# Parents : Getting the right help for young people with problems

**There are many services available to support young people and their families. It can take time to find the right one but keep trying; you often learn something useful from each person you talk to.**

### Who provides help?

In Australia places that provide 'help' for health and welfare problems are usually called **agencies, services or clinics.**

Professionals who are paid to help young people with health and welfare problems are usually called **workers.**

If your child has serious problems such as drug or alcohol addiction or mental health problems, you will need to get help and advice.

How do you know which agency is best and can give the help you need for your child's problems?

### A good place to start

Ask one of these services for advice about where your child can get the help they need:

- your local doctor
- your community health centre
- your migrant resource centre
- your local council.

### You will be asked questions

Each agency you talk to will ask you questions such as:

**Where do you and your child live?** Some agencies can only help you if you live close to them because they can only work with people living in their area.

Other agencies can work with anyone. Check if your child needs to be living near the agency to get help from them.

**Who needs the help?** You will be asked how old your child is, whether they are male or female and about the type of problems they have.

Some youth services are open to 10 - 18 year olds, while others deal with young people up to age 25.

### Appointments

Once you or your child knows the right agency to go to, ask how long your child will have to wait to get

help. Some agencies are very busy and have waiting lists.

Try hard to keep appointments. If you miss an appointment you might. You might have to go back onto a waiting list.

### Questions you or young person can ask:

Your child can ask to see a woman, a man, an older person, or someone who comes from their cultural background if they want to. Most agencies will try to meet these needs if they can.

You or your child can ask questions about the worker, their experience and qualifications.

### Family or Individual Help

Before you or your child contact an agency for help, talk with your young person about whether they prefer to see a counsellor or other worker on their own or with you or other family members.

### Some agencies work only with young people

- They do not work with families.
- The young person will tell their own story and their story is kept **private.**

Don't fight with your child about getting help. Tell them it is important for people to get help when they have problems. Then wait until they are ready to do so.

### If your child wants to get help on their own

If your young person does not want you involved, you should respect this. They have a right to privacy. A key thing you are trying to achieve is for your child to become an independent, responsible person.

If they are getting help for themselves, then this is a big positive step. You can still ask the agency they are going to for general information about how the service operates and what kind of work it does.

### Language Problems

**Ask for an interpreter if you or your child need one.** Agencies have to get an interpreter if you ask for one. You might feel more comfortable if you can speak in your own language. Let people at the agency know if you are uncomfortable with the interpreter they have chosen.

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### Did everything go well?

Was the worker friendly and helpful? Did they listen to your child carefully? Did you feel comfortable and able to talk?

If you are having trouble getting the help you need, ask to speak to a manager and explain to them your difficulties. You might then be sent to speak to someone else who is better able to help you or your child with your concerns.

### The best way to get help:

#### For your child:

- Talk to your child about the need to get help.
- Tell them solving problems takes time.
- Tell them they will need to keep all their appointments.
- Let them make contact with the agency themselves if they are old enough to do so.

#### For the family

Remember:

- Problems take a long time to grow.
- Problems can also take a long time to fix.
- You can make small changes fast.
- Small changes can make a big difference.
- Be open to receiving new ideas.

### When the young person will not accept help

If your young person does not want to get help, it can still be useful for you to find out information and pass it on to him/her.

Find out what help is available in your area. Let your child know what you have found out. Tell them about it or leave brochures for them to read.

Even if they do anything about it straight away, you have shown them you believe seeking help is a good thing to and they will know where to go in the future.

### If your child wants to get help with:

**Drug and alcohol problems** they may need to go to a drug treatment or drug counselling clinic depending on how serious their problem is.

**Mental health problems** such as depression, anxiety, hearing voices they may need to go to a mental health clinic but should see their doctor first.

**Drug and Alcohol and Mental Health problems:** they may need to see a **dual diagnosis worker** at a

drug and alcohol clinic or community health centre. These workers are trained to deal with both mental health and drug and alcohol problems.

**Eating problems:** there are eating disorder clinics.

**Behaviour problems:** your child may need to see a psychologist or social worker.

**Intellectual Disability:** your child will need to be interviewed by Disability Support Services in your state so they can tell you what help is available.

**General Youth Support:** Youth support services provide information, advice and counselling to young people about a wide range of issues including accommodation, employment, training, education programs etc.

They can link young people into other services or programs if these are required.

**Trauma:** If your child has experienced or witnessed torture or trauma before coming to Australia or on the journey here, help them to get counselling from a mental health service experienced in dealing with these issues. (see: **Settling into a new country**).

### If your child's problems are very serious and urgent

However, if you think that your child may be in danger then it is important to get help immediately.

Your doctor can give you advice about what to do if your child is in danger because:

- of a drug overdose
- of mental health problems
- they are threatening to hurt themselves
- they are threatening to hurt someone else.

**Seek advice immediately. Ring 000 if it is an emergency.**

#### → Related Fact Sheets

- What are complex problems?
- Mental Health
- Drug and Alcohol Treatment
- Adolescent Development
- Settling into a new country

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### → Tips from this Fact Sheet

- Finding the right help takes time. Be patient.
- Sometimes it is best for the young person to contact agencies for help themselves, if they are old enough to do so.
- At the first appointment, it is important to be clear about what help is needed.
- Tell people at the agency if you are unhappy with their work, so they can try to make things better for you.
- If your young person does not want to get help, it can still be useful for you to find information and pass it on to them.
- If your child is in danger get help for them immediately. Call your doctor or local hospital or 000.

#### Strong Bonds

Jesuit Social Services  
PO Box 1141  
COLLINGWOOD VIC 3066

Tel (03) 9415 8700  
Email [info@strongbonds.jss.org.au](mailto:info@strongbonds.jss.org.au)  
Web [www.strongbonds.jss.org.au](http://www.strongbonds.jss.org.au)



### → Useful resources

#### Victoria

Department of Human Services  
Tel: 1300 650 172

#### New South Wales

Tel: 13 21 11  
Web: [www.community.nsw.gov.au/about\\_us/contact\\_us/support\\_and\\_counselling\\_numbers.html/](http://www.community.nsw.gov.au/about_us/contact_us/support_and_counselling_numbers.html/)

#### Queensland

Department of Communities  
Tel: 13 13 04  
Web: [www.communities.qld.gov.au/youth/about/contactus.html](http://www.communities.qld.gov.au/youth/about/contactus.html)

#### Tasmania

Department of Health & Human Services  
Tel: 1300 555 727  
Web: [www.dhhs.tas.gov.au/health\\_and\\_wellbeing](http://www.dhhs.tas.gov.au/health_and_wellbeing)

#### South Australia

Department for Families and Communities  
Tel: 8226 8800  
Web: [www.dfc.sa.gov.au/pub/Default.aspx?tabid=163](http://www.dfc.sa.gov.au/pub/Default.aspx?tabid=163)

#### Western Australia

Department for Communities  
Tel: 1800 281 116  
Web: [www.childrenand youth.wa.gov.au](http://www.childrenand youth.wa.gov.au)

#### Northern Territory

Department of Health and Community Services  
Tel: 1800 005 485  
Web: [www.families.nt.gov.au](http://www.families.nt.gov.au)