



Youth Mental Health Crisis Care system in South Australia

2024 Parents for Parents Youth Mental Health Survey Report

Introduction.....	3
How was the survey conducted?.....	3
Executive Summary.....	3
Background and Objectives.....	3
Demographics.....	3
Key Findings.....	4
Responses/Stories.....	5
Conclusion.....	6
Recommendations.....	6

Introduction

Parents for Parents Inc. is a lived experience group, who recognise that parents and carers play a significant role in helping their young people through mental health challenges. Navigating this complex mental health system often creates a sense of overwhelm for families.

As part of the Fay Fuller Foundation Spark Grant, Parents for Parents Inc. engaged in a community research project to investigate how parents and carers can be better supported to care for their young person with mental health struggles.

This report presents insights from the 2024 Parents for Parents Youth Mental Health Survey.

How was the survey conducted?

The survey was conducted between January and March 2024 and involved an online survey of 107 parents and carers who support or have recently supported a young person under 18 years of age with mental health concerns or crisis within South Australia.

This report does not disclose personal and/or identifying information of survey respondents.

Executive Summary

This report brings together a summary of survey responses and recommendations for improvements to the Youth Mental Health Crisis Care system in South Australia. The Parents for Parents Youth Mental Health Survey was conducted to understand the challenges faced by parents and carers in supporting young people with mental health issues in South Australia. The survey results highlight the need for better support systems, access to mental health services, and the importance of case managers for complex cases.

Background and Objectives

Parents for Parents Inc is a lived experience group that recognizes the significant role parents and carers play in helping young people through mental health challenges. The objective of this survey was to investigate how parents and carers can be better supported in caring for their young person with mental health struggles.

Demographics

- Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander: 21.43% identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander.
- Multicultural Community: 38.00% identified as being part of a multicultural community.
- LGBTQI+: 20.79% identified as LGBTQI+.
- Postcode: 42% of parents or carers reside in the Southern Suburbs of Adelaide.
- 22% of parents or carers reside in Regional South Australia.
- 17% of parents or carers reside in the North and North East Suburbs of Adelaide.

- 15% of parents or carers reside in Metro Adelaide.
- 4% of parents or carers reside outside of Adelaide such as Sunshine Coast, Canberra and Brisbane.

Key Findings

1. High Incidence of Mental Health Crisis:
 - 71.03% of respondents are currently supporting a young person under the age of 18 in mental health crisis.
 - 27.10% have supported a young person in the past three years.
2. Age Distribution of Young People in Crisis:
 - The ages of young people currently being supported range from 9 to 23 years, with a significant number between 14 and 18 years.
3. Recognition and Awareness:
 - 84.62% of respondents were able to recognize the early signs of mental health concerns.
 - However, only 58.49% were generally aware of available services, and 45.28% did not know how to access them.
4. Access to Mental Health Services:
 - 81.13% of respondents were able to access mental health services for their young person.
 - Difficulties in accessing services included long wait times (reported by 30 respondents), financial barriers (reported by 10 respondents), and lack of information (reported by 15 respondents).
5. Support for Parents:
 - 77.67% of respondents were not provided with supports to maintain their own wellbeing while dealing with a child in mental health crisis.
 - Many parents expressed the need for emotional support (reported by 20 respondents), practical assistance (reported by 15 respondents), and better communication from services (reported by 10 respondents).
6. Need for a Standalone Facility:
 - 64.76% of respondents indicated they would consider accessing a short-term residential mental health service for their child away from the Women's & Children's Hospital.
 - The survey highlights the inadequacy of current services and the need for a dedicated facility to provide timely and appropriate care.

Responses / Stories

1. "W and Cs mental health nurse refused to talk to me as a part of their assessment. This was disgusting. I felt my voice and rights were not heard and I was feeling unsafe being made to take my child home."
2. "Our child has complex health presentations and as a result experiences mental health challenges but as they are on the NDIS we were told to go back to our providers for help. This was not something in a crisis late at night that was possible. If there was a case manager that was able to work across departments and funding buckets it would have greatly helped instead of feeling like we were a pinball machine going back and forth with no answers and very little support."
3. "I was on my own no hospitals would help them. They packed their bag and begged me to take them and was sent home from Victor Harbor, Women's and Children's and Noarlunga hospitals."
4. "There needs to be more accountability on prescription management. Emergency departments will not make changes and simple send you out the door to go back on waitlists. This can be terrifying when changes to children's medication can result in suicide attempts and ideation. There needs to be an emergency medication response team that can liaise with the prescribing doctor in an emergency situation, so families are not left out on their own"
5. "Referrals (MANY) were made but the wait times were really long and it was scary feeling like we were falling into gaps of not yet an adult but over 16. GP was amazing in making regular check in appt, some were on the phone with my child non functioning. They just met them where they were at and maintained the connection. This was fundamental in their ongoing care."
6. "I needed support and counselling also. They should have visited the home. When my child started recently with their avoidance tactics their suicide team walked away and so did their counsellor"
7. "Southern youth mental health team, then discharged as issues related to disability and limited support options available, twice in 12 months
8. Had I not been persistent in calling them to see if there was cancelation waitlist, asking GP to keep making more referrals to other potential providers who may have capacity to take on new clients / youth. Costs were huge. GP was fantastic on some bulk billing of appointments but once psychiatrist and Psychologist appt were made and repour being built the \$150+ out of pocket expenses and then medication trialling - fees was at times \$1,000 in a month.
9. "As both our kids are over 14, as parents we get very little information on the strategies we can support/put in place to complement the approach of the psychologist. We're in the dark. We wanted to be sure we weren't contradicting or undermining the plans put in place by psychologists to manage anxiety, depression, OCD."
10. "I feel that I could have been supported better by the services I accessed during my child's crisis if they had provided more personalized and consistent communication. It would have been helpful to have a dedicated point of contact who could provide updates on my child's

progress and answer any questions or concerns I had. Additionally, having access to more resources and information about coping strategies and support services would have been beneficial in navigating the crisis. Overall, I believe that more individualized and proactive support could have greatly improved my experience with the services during my child's crisis.”

Conclusion

The survey underscores the urgent need for a more accessible, comprehensive, and compassionate mental health support system for young people and their families. By addressing the identified gaps and implementing the recommended changes, we can create a more supportive environment that promotes the well-being and resilience of young people facing mental health challenges. The insights and recommendations from this survey provide a valuable roadmap for policymakers, healthcare providers, and community organizations to enhance mental health care and support for families in South Australia.

Recommendations

1. Establish Dedicated Case Managers

- Implement dedicated case managers to guide families through the mental health system, providing personalized support and coordination of care.

2. Create a Centralized Information Hub

- Develop a centralized online platform that provides clear, concise information about available mental health services, eligibility criteria, and access procedures.

3. Develop a Youth Crisis Mental Health Facility

- Establish a short-term residential mental health facility specifically for young people and their families, separate from the hospital system, to provide immediate and specialized care in a crisis.

4. Enhance Peer Support Programs

- Implement peer support programs where parents and young people can connect with others who have similar experiences, providing emotional support and practical advice.

5. Improve Access to Crisis Services

- Increase the availability and accessibility of crisis services, such as hotlines and mobile crisis teams, to provide immediate support during mental health emergencies.

6. Provide Comprehensive Follow-Up Care

- Ensure continuous follow-up care with regular check-ins and ongoing support from mental health professionals to monitor progress and address any emerging issues.

7. Offer Financial Assistance

- Provide financial support to cover the costs of mental health services and related expenses, reducing the financial burden on families.

8. Implement Family Support Programs

- Develop programs that offer practical assistance, such as respite care, counselling, and support groups for parents and caregivers.

9. Enhance Communication and Coordination

- Improve communication and coordination between different mental health services, ensuring that all providers are informed and working together to support the young person and their family.

10. Increase Awareness and Training

- Raise awareness about available mental health services and provide training for parents, caregivers, and professionals on how to navigate the system and support young people in crisis.

These recommendations aim to address the critical gaps in the current mental health support system, providing comprehensive and accessible care for young people and their families.



**Parents for Parents Inc,
Lived experience support for
families and youth mental health**

Inc A44902
ABN 2015 123 9621
ACNC registered DGR1 charity

✉ admin@parentsforparents.org.au

🌐 www.parentsforparents.org.au

f [parentsforchange.adelaide](https://www.facebook.com/parentsforchange.adelaide)