

Your rights

- You have the right to:
 - receive information about your rights
 - be fully informed about services, treatment and options in a clear and open way
 - have authorised psychiatric practitioners assessing that you require a voluntary admission
 - be included in decisions and choices about your care
 - to refuse any treatment you do not want
 - leave the hospital at any time
 - contact people by mail, phone or electronically, and be visited (this right may be restricted)
 - privacy and confidentiality of your personal information
 - access your medical records (this right may be restricted)
 - keep your personal items secure while you are in hospital
 - have your case reviewed by your doctor or the NT Civil and Administrative Tribunal (NTCAT).
 - an interpreter
- If you are unhappy about something, you can make a complaint to your mental health facility, a Community Visitor, the NT Ombudsman or the Health and Community Services Complaints Commission (HCSCC)

Further information

The information in this brochure relates to the laws set out in the *Mental Health and Related Services Act 1998*. Information about the Act is summarised in the following set of brochures:

- Referral to hospital for an examination (Form 9)
- Voluntary treatment in hospital
- Treatment in the community
- Involuntary treatment in hospital
- Receiving treatment for a mental illness

More information is also available from <https://nt.gov.au/wellbeing/mental-health>

Northern Territory Mental Health Access Line (24hrs, 7 days)

Free call: 1800 682 288

Community Visitor Program

Free call: 1800 021 919

NT Civil and Administrative Tribunal (NTCAT)

Free Call: 1800 604 622

Health and Community Services Complaints Commission (HCSCC)

Free Call: 1800 004 474



We can book an interpreter for you

Voluntary treatment in hospital

This brochure provides you with information about what your rights are and what you can expect if you are having treatment for a mental illness as a voluntary patient in hospital.



Becoming a voluntary patient

If you have been admitted as a voluntary patient, it is because:

- An authorised psychiatric practitioner has said that you need treatment and care in hospital; and
- you (or someone who can give consent on your behalf – for example a parent) has agreed to you being admitted.

An authorised psychiatric practitioner is a doctor who has been specially trained to diagnose and treat mental health disorders.

What you can expect

- You will be one of a number of patients in the ward and staff will explain what is expected when staying in the ward.
- You will see an authorised psychiatric practitioner and other staff such as psychologists, social workers, occupational therapists Aboriginal mental health workers and nurses.
- You will have a thorough physical and psychiatric assessment to know what is the best treatment and care for your mental illness.
- If you are under 18, you will be on a children's mental health ward, with specialist staff.
- You may not be allowed to smoke in hospital and you may need to apply for leave to be able to smoke.

Treatment

- Treatment may include medication as well as occupational therapy, individual or group counselling, psychological programs and electroconvulsive therapy (ECT).
- Being a voluntary patient means that no treatment can be provided to you without your consent (agreement) or the agreement of someone who can provide it on your behalf (for example a parent).
- Agreement must be made without any pressure and before agreement you (or someone on your behalf) must have:
 - been given information about your assessment, admission and proposed treatment in a language you understand; and
 - understood what is being agreed to; and
 - been told that you can change your mind and your the agreement can be withdrawn at any time.
- You must be given enough time to think about all of this information, ask questions and request further information or advice as needed.
- If you refuse treatment and the treating team believe that you are unable to make decisions and give informed consent then they may decide to detain you involuntarily.

Discharge and leaving the hospital

- Voluntary patients can leave the hospital at any time.
- If they no longer wish to receive treatment, they can be discharged by an authorised psychiatric practitioner.
- If you are thinking about discharging yourself, it is important that you first discuss it with your psychiatrist and other staff members.

Can you be kept in against your will?

- If you want to leave the hospital against advice and a doctor or senior nurse thinks that you have become more unwell and may need involuntary treatment, they may refer you for an examination by an authorised psychiatric practitioner.
- You may be stopped from leaving so that the authorised psychiatric practitioner can examine you.
- At the examination the authorised psychiatric practitioner will consider:
 - if you have a mental illness that needs treatment; and
 - if you are well enough to make a decision about treatment; and
 - if there a risk to you and/or other people if you do not get treatment; and
 - the least restrictive way of providing you with treatment and ensuring the safety of you and/or other people.
- If you do not meet the criteria for being an involuntary patient, you will be allowed to leave.