

## Clinical Tips: Engaging Family Support

Family members and friends of young people can offer support and resources that are vital for young people living with mental health issues. With the young person's agreement, their family members or friends can be involved in the care of the young person.

It is critical to gain the young person's consent to involve family and friends in their clinical care. Wanting to protect parents from worry or concern about confidentiality can act as barriers to the inclusion of family and friends. These concerns can be explored with the young person with clear information about family inclusive practice where the young person's confidentiality is upheld.

Involving family and friends in a young person's care has many benefits, including:

1. Assisting the clinician to gain a comprehensive understanding of a young person's difficulties and formulate a clinical approach tailored to the young person.
2. Harnessing positive factors that will facilitate the young person's engagement with services (e.g. parental encouragement, transport to appointments).
3. Ensuring a shared understanding of the issues and consistency of care
4. Strengthening the resources that family and friends can provide to sustaining positive change in the young person's recovery.
5. Identifying and addressing barriers to engagement and or recovery that may exist in the young person's social network sooner rather than later (e.g. lack of awareness of their difficulties among family and friends)
6. Family and friends are being well supported so that they are able to be effective in their care for the young person

Note that involving family in a young person's care is not always helpful or safe if abuse has or is occurring. Risk issues should be explored with the young person.

Australia-wide information about family supports can be found at [ReachOut](#).

More information on family and friends inclusive practice can be found [here](#).

### Practice tip

Not all young people will want to involve family and friends directly. Sometimes, family involvement is inappropriate. Sometimes, the young person will benefit from working individually for a period of time, and become open to family or supportive friends involvement at a later stage.