Specialist mental health services are provided by the Local Health District for free to older people living at home or in residential aged care.

Who is this service for?

We are here to help older people (usually 65 years or older) who may have a mental health problem requiring specialist care in addition to their GP or private mental health worker. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people may be referred at a younger age if they desire.

Our aims are to improve mental health, prevent hospital admissions and provide support after an admission if this cannot be prevented. Problems we help include depression, anxiety, thoughts of suicide or psychosis (being unable to work out if beliefs and experiences are real or not eg hearing voices). We can also assist severe behavioural problems associated with dementia at any age where required in addition to NSW Dementia Behaviour Management Advisory Services.

http://dbmas.org.au

Who can make a referral?

Anyone may make a referral by calling the free Mental Health Line 1800 011 511.

It is helpful if your local doctor (GP) is involved, and could provide extra information such as a referral letter and results of recent tests when asked by the service.

If you are recontacting the service within 6 months after you last saw us, you may directly contact the team you were involved with using the details provided to you. Still call the Mental Health Line if you need urgent help or don’t have the team’s number.

How long will it take to be seen?

We will aim to call you the next working day to let you know when you will be seen. It will usually take at least 1 week to be seen and we try to see most people within 2 weeks. The teams review the information about each person who is referred and then see the most urgent referrals first.
What happens if you cannot wait?

If there is an immediate threat to your safety or that of others ring '000'.

In emergencies the local Hospital Emergency Departments can arrange a mental health assessment. The person taking your referral can also arrange a more urgent assessment by another mental health team where this is required.

Who will see me?

You will be seen by a team member to better understand your problems. This will usually be a nurse or social worker but could be a doctor (psychiatrist), psychologist or occupational therapist. After this visit there will be a discussion with you about who may be best to continue to help you.

Where will I be seen?

You will be asked if you want to be seen in your own home (including residential aged care facility) or in an outpatient clinic. We will try to meet your preference.

What type of services are provided?

We call our services ‘person centred’, ‘recovery focussed’ and ‘biopsychosocial’.

This means we aim to:

- Consider how your physical health, mental health and social situation interact
- Seek to understand you, your background, culture, and the things that make life meaningful to you
- Develop goals regarding care with you and those important to you
- Provide mental health care that helps you to improve your quality of life and return to doing those activities most desired by you.

Care is usually provided in partnership with you, your family (if you desire) and your GP.

- Interpreters are available if required
- Aboriginal Social and Emotional Wellbeing Workers can be involved if requested.

Often the mental health service will only be involved for a short period to assist in developing a plan that your local doctor or other services can continue. There may be a small group of people who do require longer term care.

Your clinician will discuss with you which type of care may assist you. After an assessment, the care that may be provided includes talking therapies, reviewing medication, education about mental health, teaching new skills (eg to help with sleeping problems, relaxation or managing behaviours associated with dementia), or accessing other services. Services are provided in a way that meets the requirements of both the Mental Health Act and Guardianship Act.

Where are the outpatient clinics?

Clinics are located at Bankstown and Camden Hospitals, Bowral Community Health Centre and Braeside Hospital (located on Fairfield Hospital site).

How will I be actively involved in my care?

Whilst you are involved with the service the team members should:

- ✔ Give you an opinion on your presenting problem
- ✔ Offer you an opportunity to rate your own mental health
- ✔ Let you know how you may make a complaint
- ✔ Invite you to provide feedback on the service
- ✔ Provide information on your rights and responsibilities.

You can involve your family in all these activities if you wish.