

## Caring for people with a disability or chronic illness

### Who is a carer?

A carer has a vital role in managing the needs of another who may be living with a disability or a chronic illness. This support enables the person to live independently and may be provided by a partner, child, family member or friend. Carers may care for a few hours a week or all day, every day.

### Why care for carers?

Caring for others can be complex and demanding and a carer may require assistance in a range of ways to ensure their own health and wellbeing. Each person's experience of caring is likely to be different and may be enhanced by the provision of information, support, respite, education, training or counselling.

### What help is available for carers?

The Commonwealth Respite and Carelink Centre Southern Region (CRCCSR), provides practical and emotional support for carers in the southern suburbs of Melbourne. The Centre also works in partnership with health and community-based agencies to help meet the needs of carers.

The first point of contact is *CareLine* – a telephone service for carers. *CareLine* can assist with information, support, planned short term and urgent respite and is staffed 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. In some cases, after calling *CareLine*, carers are referred to a carer support worker who can offer further support.

### What help is available for carers of people with a disability or chronic illness?

Carer support workers provide short term assistance and support to carers of people with a disability and those with a chronic illness. They can provide emotional support, practical assistance and may link carers with other services that can assist them. Specifically, they may:

- Provide an opportunity for carers to talk confidentially about their issues

- Assist carers to plan their short and long term care and support needs
- Provide carers with emotional support and help identify ways to improve their wellbeing
- Explore ways carers can get the most effective breaks and supports.

### What is respite and how can it help?

Respite services aim to offer positive experiences for people with a disability or chronic illness and at the same time give carers a break and some time for themselves. The aim is to help carers find the balance between caring for themselves and the person they care for. Types of respite services available include:

In-home support for the carer and the person they care for, as well as out-of-home respite such as:

- Day programs
- Before and after school programs
- Camps and holiday activities
- Recreation and leisure activities
- Facility based respite

A useful web resource for disability respite options and services in the southern metropolitan region of Melbourne is [www.respitesouth.org.au](http://www.respitesouth.org.au).

### What next?

Your doctor has identified you as a carer who may benefit from some support and has provided you this information to help you get started.

Please telephone 1800 052 222 for a confidential discussion about the range of options available to you.