

Easy Read Summary

Mental health for parents with intellectual disability

About this sheet



This sheet has information about a research project



The project was done by researchers at the National Centre of Excellence in Intellectual Disability Health



The project was on **mental health**

Mental health is about how you think and feel



The project looked at mental health of people with intellectual disability who have had a baby



This sheet is for people who want to know about the project and what it found



Some words in this sheet are written in **bold**

Bold means the letters are thicker and darker

We say what the words in bold mean



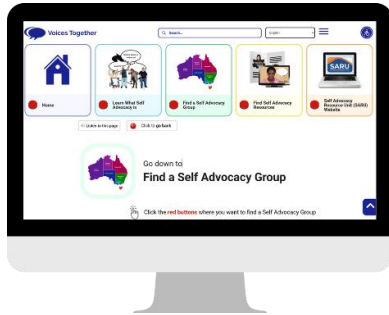
It can be hard to think about experiences with mental health



You can ask for help to read this sheet

You could ask

- Family or a friend
- A support person
- A self-advocacy group



If you want to find a self-advocacy group
you can go to this website

<https://www.voicestogether.com.au/find-a-self-advocacy-group/>



You can talk to someone you trust about
your feelings



If you are very upset and need to speak to
someone now you can call

- Lifeline on 13 11 14

Any time of the day

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people
can also call



- 13YARN on 13 92 76

Any time of the day

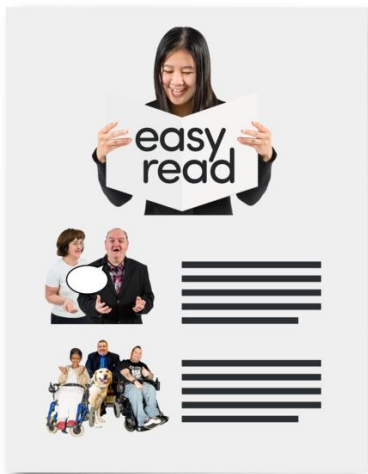


There is more information about mental health support on page 15 of this sheet



You do not need to read all the information in this sheet at the same time

You can take a break if you need to



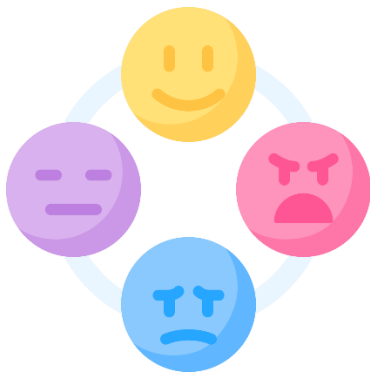
This sheet has information about

- What we already know
- What we need to know
- What we did
- What we found
- What we think needs to happen

What we already know



Being pregnant and having a baby can affect mental health



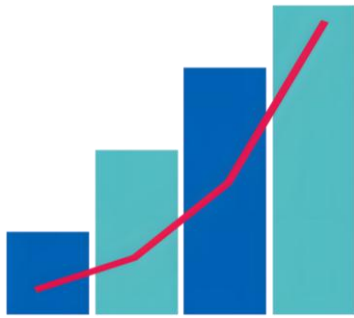
It is normal to have a mix of feelings during pregnancy and after having a baby



All parents need support



A mental health condition is when thoughts and feelings make it hard for you to do the things you want and need to do



We know that people with intellectual disability are more likely to have mental health conditions than people without intellectual disability



We also know that people with intellectual disability are at higher risk of having problems with their pregnancy and birth including



- **Diabetes**

Diabetes means your body can not control the amount of sugar in your blood



- **High blood pressure**

High blood pressure means your heart has to work harder to pump blood around your body



- **Early labour and birth**

Early labour and birth is when a person goes into labour or has their baby before 37 weeks of pregnancy



Health and mental health workers might not know how to give support that works well for people with intellectual disability

- who are pregnant and
- after they have a baby

What we need to know



Not much research has looked at mental health for people with intellectual disability when they are

- pregnant and
- have a baby



Understanding more about mental health for people with intellectual disability having a baby will help us to know how to make health services better

What we did



We looked at health information for people who had a baby in a hospital

- In New South Wales
- Between 2002-2017



Our project included

- 2,262 people with intellectual disability
- 27,995 people without intellectual disability

We looked at how many people used mental health services from



- 20 weeks before their baby was born
- to



- One year after their baby was born



We looked at how many people went to the Emergency Department for a mental health condition

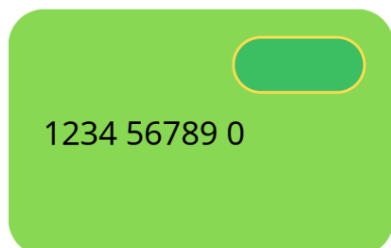


We looked at how many people stayed in the hospital for a mental health condition



We looked at how many people used **out-patient** mental health services

Outpatient means a person is not staying in the hospital



We looked at how many people used mental health services paid by Medicare

This might include psychologists and psychiatrists

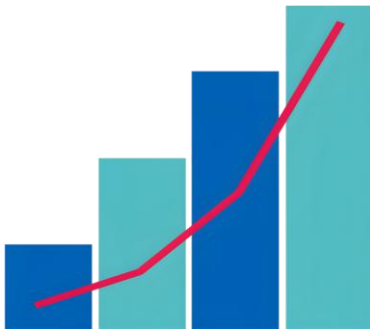


We looked at the types of mental health conditions people had



We looked at how many people were given mental health medicines

What we found



More people with intellectual disability used mental health services during pregnancy and after their baby was born



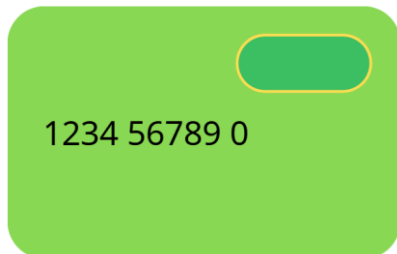
More people with intellectual disability visited the Emergency Department for a mental health condition



More people with intellectual disability
stayed in the hospital for a mental health
condition



More people with intellectual disability used
outpatient mental health services



More people with intellectual disability used
mental health services paid for by
Medicare



More people with intellectual disability were
given medicines for mental health



The most common mental health conditions for people with intellectual disability were **depression** and **anxiety**



Depression is when people

- Feel very sad or down for a long time
- Might not feel like doing the things they usually do



Anxiety is when people

- Feel very worried most of the time
- Have worries that stop them from doing things they need or like to do

What we think needs to happen



People with intellectual disability should be included in **policies** about mental health care for people who are having a baby

Policies are rules about how health services work



Policies should be co-designed with people with intellectual disability



Health workers need training on how to support parents with intellectual disability



People with intellectual disability should be involved in training health workers



Mental health checks need to work well for people with intellectual disability who are having a baby



Information about pregnancy, parenting and mental health should be co-designed with people with intellectual disability



Health and disability services need to be able to work together with parents with intellectual disability



Support for parents with intellectual disability should be based on what is important to them and the goals they have for their family



We need more research to see if mental health medicines are being used in the right way for parents with intellectual disability

Support for mental health



If you are pregnant or have a new baby you can ask your health workers about mental health support



Your health workers could be your

- Doctor
- Midwife
- Local community family health nurse



If you need expert mental health support your health worker might refer you to a team that works with

- people who are pregnant or who have had a baby or
- people with intellectual disability



There are also helplines you can call for mental health support



The helplines in this sheet are

- Free

You do not have to pay



- **Confidential**

Confidential means your information is private



- For people calling from anywhere in Australia

For mental health support you can call



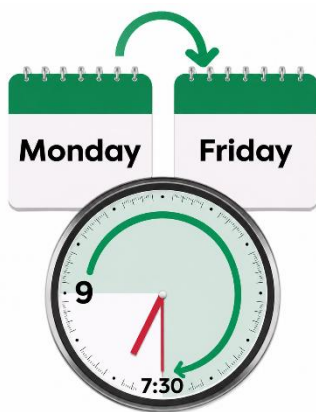
The PANDA National Helpline

The phone number is 1300 726 306

The PANDA National Helpline is for people who



- Are pregnant or
- Had their baby up to 12 months ago



The PANDA National Helpline is open

- 9am to 7:30pm on Monday to Friday



- 9am to 4pm on Saturdays and most public holidays



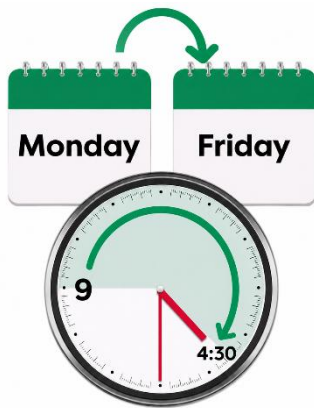
ForWhen

The phone number is 1300 24 23 22



The ForWhen Helpline is for people who

- Are pregnant or
- Had their baby up to 12 months ago

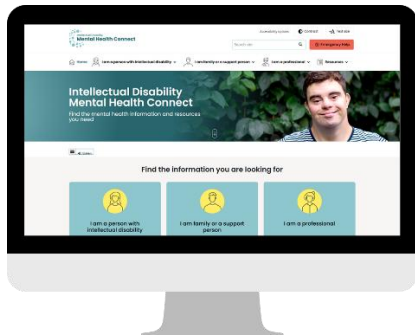


The ForWhen Helpline is open

- 9am to 4:30pm on Monday to Friday



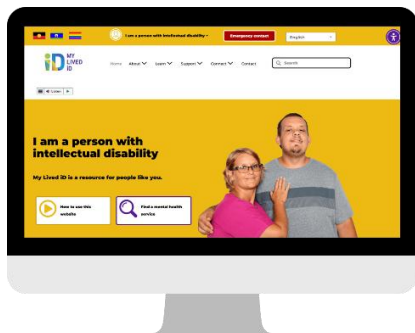
You can also find information for people with intellectual disability online



Intellectual Disability Mental Health Connect has information about mental health

- The website address is

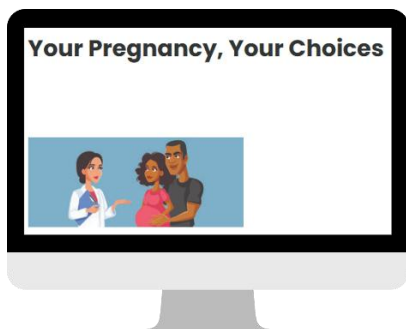
<https://idmhconnect.health/>



My Lived ID has information about where to find mental health services

- The website address is

<https://mylivedid.org.au/>



Northcott Innovation has information about supported decision making during pregnancy

- The website address is

<https://northcottinnovation.com.au/project/supportingwomenwithidduringpregnancy/>

Who made this sheet



This sheet was made by the National
Centre of Excellence in Intellectual
Disability Health



The sheet was made in 2026



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If you want to contact the people who made this sheet you can

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