

# Parental mental illness: How are children and adults affected?

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A University of Western Sydney study will investigate the experiences of adults whose parents suffered mental illness during their childhood.

The study will seek to gather information about what it was like to grow up with a parent with [mental illness](#) and will focus on the adult children's accounts of their own current parenting roles.

Gillian Murphy, a PhD candidate from the Family and Community [Health](#) Research Centre (FaCH), says that studies have suggested that almost a quarter of all children in Australia will experience parental mental illness at some stage.

"While there is a growing body of literature concerning the children of those with mental illness, there remains limited work about the longer term [coping skills](#) and needs of the adult child," says Ms Murphy, who is also the Mental Health Coordinator at UWS.

"It is envisaged that my work will identify the strengths and needs of the adult child's parenting experiences and will contribute to the education needs of all health and social care professionals."

Ms. Murphy says qualitative studies in the area have previously shown that adult children experience a great deal of anxiety.

"However, much of the work has been undertaken with [adult children](#) who have themselves been diagnosed with a mental illness," says Ms

Murphy.

"This study seeks to meet with people who have experienced parental mental illness during their childhood and who do not have mental illness or required counselling support."

Ms. Murphy will use the narratives and the findings from the study to highlight family needs and suitable family-based interventions for the training and education of health and social care professionals.

The researcher is looking for participants who are:

- \* English speaking
- \* aged 18 years and over
- \* have one or both parents diagnosed with mental illness during childhood, which resulted in hospitalisation
- \* never been diagnosed or treated for mental ill health and are now a parent (with or without contact with your [children](#))

Participation in the study involves talking to Ms Murphy in an audio recorded interview that will take approximately one hour, at a mutually convenient time on a University of Western Sydney Campus.

Interview options include face-to-face, telephone or online exchange. All enquiries and participation in the study is entirely voluntary. Privacy and confidentiality will be maintained.

Provided by University of Western Sydney

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