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## Mental health services and programs explained

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### Summary

- Victoria's public mental health services provide help for young people, adults, and older people.
  - Visit your local doctor for an assessment of your mental health and for referrals to specialists, if needed.
  - For expert mental health advice, contact your local mental health service.
  - There is online mental health help, advice and information available for you at any age.
  - In case of emergency call **triple zero** (000).
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If you think that you or someone you know has a mental health problem, there are a number of ways that you can seek advice, information and referral for general and mental health issues in Victoria.

- For immediate, expert health advice from a nurse, call **NURSE-ON-CALL** on **1300 60 60 24**.
- For general health advice, visit your local doctor for an initial assessment of your mental health needs.
- For expert mental health advice, contact your local mental health service, which can be found via Victoria's government-approved **mental health services directory**.
- In case of emergency, call **triple zero** (000).

Public mental health services are provided through 'area mental health services' across Victoria. Within these services, the programs are divided into three main categories:

- child and adolescent mental health services (people aged 0–18 years)
- adult mental health services (for people aged 16–64 years)
- aged persons mental health services (over 65 years).

To contact your nearest mental health service, visit the **Department of Health & Human Services** website.

Although the state government provides services for Victorians experiencing a serious mental illness, there are also private health providers, not-for-profits and community organisations that also offer help, as does your local general practitioner.

### Mental health assistance

If you are in an emergency situation **call triple zero** (000) for emergency services. If you are on a mobile phone call **112** to connect to emergency services.

### Immediate referrals

For people who need immediate help for their mental health, the police, ambulance staff or a doctor might call the Acute Community Intervention Service (ACIS) to help. Previously referred to as a crisis and assessment or 'CAT' team, the ACIS can provide:

- support, advice and referral over the phone
- assessment and treatment in a hospital emergency department
- treatment in a person's home.

The service operates out of Victoria's area mental health services and is available 24 hours a day. Find a local

**mental health service**.

### Adult mental health services

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The Victorian hospital system offers treatment for people with serious mental illness, while community mental health services, private psychiatric services and other specialist clinics also offer a range of other options for people who need intensive treatment options.

Mental health services for adults include:

- public hospitals – providing treatment for voluntary and compulsory patients through ‘acute in-patient wards’
- community-based services and teams – bridging the gap between in-hospital care and living in the community and include the Acute Community Intervention Service (ACIS), community care units (CCUs), Prevention and Recovery Care services (PARCs) and outpatient clinical treatment
- Mental Health Community Support Services (MHCSS) – these are managed by non-government organisations and provide assistance with daily activities and help people with severe and enduring mental illness to live successfully in the community

### **Specialist mental health services**

Specialist mental health services are available across Victoria for people with particular mental health needs.

These include services for:

- families (including family violence)
- adults with acquired brain injury or neurodegenerative conditions with an associated psychiatric disorder
- people with both an intellectual disability and mental illness
- people with eating disorders
- people with personality disorders
- people living in remote areas
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people
- new mothers dealing with antenatal or postnatal mental health issues
- war veterans.

To find out more visit [health.vic specialist mental health services](https://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/health/condition-pages/specialist-mental-health-services)

### **Mental health services for children and young people**

The Victorian Government provides specialist mental health services for children and adolescents up to the age of 18 years.

Young people between the ages of 16 and 18 may be treated by either a child and adolescent mental health service or an adult service, depending on their needs. Services include:

- clinical assessment and treatment in a clinic based setting
- consultation and liaison psychiatry services providing consultation, support and assessment to patients and their families in a health service, usually in paediatric inpatient wards. Patients will have medical illnesses (for example, cystic fibrosis or leukaemia), with associated psychiatric symptoms.
- acute inpatient services, which offer short-term assessment and in-patient treatment for severe emotional disturbances that cannot be assessed satisfactorily or treated safely and effectively within the community
- the Statewide Child Inpatient Unit, which offers assessment and mental health treatment for children under the age of 13 who are experiencing severe emotional, behavioural and relationship difficulties
- autism assessment offering diagnostic assessment of children with serious developmental disorders such as autism. Some services also provide community consultation and liaison, and link children and their families into appropriate support services in the community including school support
- day programs offering integrated therapeutic and educational support for young people with behavioural difficulties, emotional problems such as severe depression or anxiety, personality difficulties or severe mental illness
- intensive mobile youth outreach services providing intensive outreach mental health case management and support to adolescents who are showing substantial and prolonged psychological disturbance, and have complex needs that may include challenging, at-risk and suicidal behaviours

- school-based early intervention programs (conduct disorder programs) offer early intervention and prevention services designed to reduce the prevalence and impact of conduct disorder.

For detailed information about Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services visit [health.vic](http://health.vic).

**Headspace**, a specialist mental health organisation, offers free support, information, counselling and advice to young people between the ages of 12 and 25. Visit the [headspace](http://headspace) website to find a centre near you.

For crisis support, counselling and mental health information young people can contact:

- **Kids Help Line**– call **1800 55 1800** for free counselling and advice for young people between the ages of five and 25.
- **Youthbeyondblue**– call **1300 22 4636** for free telephone counselling or visit their website for information, resources and support for young people with depression or anxiety.
- **ReachOut** – visit their website for information, tools and support for young people with mental health issues.

### **Mental health services for older people**

Specialist mental health services are available to treat people over the age of 65 and the elderly.

These include:

- Aged persons mental health community teams which provide assessment and treatment, rehabilitation and case management services. Services also provide support to other aged care service providers and education for consumers, families and carers
- Aged Persons Mental Health (APMH) nursing homes and hostels for people whose mental illness cannot be managed in mainstream aged care residential services
- Acute in-patient services, which provide short-term management and mental health treatment during an acute phase of mental illness until the person can be treated in the community.

### **Telephone and online support for mental health issues**

Mental health helplines are a great resource if you are struggling with mental health issues. Speak to someone who will listen and can give you appropriate advice and tell you the steps to take to get help.

Find someone to talk to by calling one of the following helplines:

- **Kids Help Line** – call **1800 55 1800** for free counselling for young people between the ages of five and 25.
- **Lifeline** – call **13 11 14** for this Australia-wide crisis support and prevention service.
- **Suicide Call Back Service** – call **1300 659 467** for this free service for people having suicidal thoughts or family or friends affected by suicide.
- **SuicideLine** – call **1300 651 251** for free and anonymous support, 24 hours a day, seven days a week across Victoria.
- **Mensline Australia** – call **1300 78 99 78** to access this free telephone support service for men with family and relationship issues.
- **beyondblue** – call **1300 22 4636** for support for issues relating to anxiety and depression.

### **Private mental health services**

Your doctor can suggest mental health services in your local area or refer you to a psychiatrist, psychologist or other mental health professional in the community usually for up to six sessions to start with. If your doctor refers

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you to a psychiatrist, you may be eligible for a Medicare rebate, although the number of visits that receive a Medicare rebate is limited.

If your psychiatrist decides you need a more intensive level of treatment, they can provide you with advice and organise further treatment, at the most appropriate service including through community mental health programs, residential clinics and hospitals.

### **Where to get help**

- Your GP (doctor)
- Mental healthcare professional
- Online mental health support websites

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