

Hospitals, clinics and residential options for mental illness

Summary

- The Victorian Government delivers mental health services and there are private mental health providers, not-for-profits and community organisations that also provide services.
- There are three main categories of mental health services: adult mental health services, child and adolescent mental health services, and aged persons mental health services.
- The Victorian Government offers a number of mental health services to help bridge the gap between in-hospital care and living in the community, including the Acute Community Intervention Service (ACIS) and community care units (CCUs).
- A range of specialist mental health services is available across Victoria for people with special needs, including those with brain disorders, drug dependencies, family issues and dual disabilities.
- The Victorian Government provides community-based and inpatient mental health services for children and adolescents with behavioural difficulties, emotional health problems, emerging personality difficulties, and severe mental illness.
- Aged Persons Mental Health (APMH) nursing homes and hostels care for people who cannot be managed in mainstream aged care residential services and acute aged care services provide short-term management and treatment during an acute phase of a mental illness.

There are times when the severity of a mental illness means that you, or someone you are close to, may need to get help from a mental health service provided by a hospital, clinic or residential care facility. If you are struggling with a mental illness, it is important that you talk to your doctor, they can direct you to the service that best suits your needs.

The Victorian Government delivers mental health services for Victorians experiencing a serious mental illness, and there are some private health providers, not-for-profits and community organisations that also provide services.

Mental health services are divided into three main categories:

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

Better Access to Mental Health Care has a [fact sheet](#) for patients regarding Medicare rebates.

Adult mental health services

The severity of your mental illness will determine where you are treated. The Victorian hospital system offers treatment for people with serious mental illness.

Community-based providers, private psychiatric and rehabilitation services, and other specialist mental health clinics also offer a range of other options for people who need intensive treatment for their mental illness.

Private psychiatric services

Your doctor can suggest support services in your local area or refer you to a psychiatrist. If you are referred to a psychiatrist, this means you might be able to access a Medicare rebate via [Better Access for psychiatry services](#).

If your psychiatrist decides you need a higher level of mental health care, they can advise you on, or may organise, further treatment through community clinics and hospitals.

Hospital stays

Major public hospitals in Victoria treat voluntary and compulsory patients with mental illness in 'acute inpatient wards' and 'Secure/Extended Care Inpatient Services'. Private psychiatric hospitals operate in larger cities in Victoria but only treat voluntary patients.

Acute inpatient wards offer voluntary and compulsory short-term treatment for people with a serious mental illness. Find out more about [**acute inpatient services**](#).

Secure extended care units (SECUs) provide medium to long-term inpatient treatment and rehabilitation for people with a serious mental illness or disorder in a hospital setting. This service offers intensive treatment for people who cannot live safely in the community.

Community-based mental health services and teams

The Victorian Government offers a number of mental health services to help bridge the gap between inpatient treatment and living in the community.

Acute Community Intervention Service (ACIS) provides advice, diagnosis and treatment for people experiencing a mental health crisis. The service is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week and includes telephone advice, emergency department care and short- to medium-term mental health treatment at home.

Community care units (CCUs) provide a comfortable, 'homely' place where people can prepare to re-enter the community. The units offer medium- to long-term, clinical care and rehabilitation services for people with a serious mental illness and psychosocial disability. Although some people move through quickly, others may need this level of mental health support for a few years.

Clinical services in the community

- **Prevention and Recovery Care services (PARC)** – offers a short-term treatment option for people who do not need a hospital admission.

Specialist mental health services

A range of specialist services are available across Victoria for people with special mental health needs:

The Bouvierie Centre – Victoria's Family Institute – specialises in family approaches to mental health treatment. It offers a range of programs to individuals and family members. Find more information on The [**Bouvierie Centre website**](#).

- **Brain disorders service** – a service for adults with acquired brain injury or neurodegenerative conditions with an associated psychiatric disorder. Hospital, residential and community programs are available.
- **Dual disability services** – provides specialist clinical mental health services in relation to people with both intellectual disability and mental illness.
- **Eating disorder services** – in-patient and community-based services available at several hospitals and health services including Royal Childrens Hospital, Alfred Health, Monash Health, St Vincent's Health, Austin Health, North Western Mental Health, Barwon Health and Bendigo Health.
- **Forensicare, Victorian Institute of Forensic Mental Health** – services to offenders living with mental illness, including secure hospital in-patient services at Thomas Embling Hospital and community-based services.
- **Aboriginal mental health services** page. Services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people – a number of services to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are provided throughout Victoria. Find more information on the
- **Mother–baby services** – specialist mother and baby services allow mothers to bring their babies into hospital with them while they get treatment for mental health issues. Services are available at Austin Health, Southern Health, and Mercy Health and Latrobe.
- **Neuropsychiatric service** – the Royal Melbourne Hospital program runs a specialist service that offers assessment, short-term admission and treatment for neuropsychiatric disorders. Find out more on the Neuropsychiatry Unit website.
- **Personality disorder service (Spectrum)** – Spectrum provides treatment for people with severe and borderline personality disorder who are at risk of serious self-harm or suicide. Learn more on the Spectrum website.

- **Psychotropic Drug Advisory Service** (email)— provides information on psychiatric medicines and other psychoactive substances. Call the Psychotropic Drug Advisory Service on 0417536655 or (03) 9035 3089.
- **Reconnexion** – provides information, education and counselling for panic, anxiety and depression. It also provides specialist mental health counselling for people who want to withdraw from benzodiazepine or analgesics use.

Child and youth mental health services

The Victorian Government provides specialist mental health services for children and adolescents, youth and adults, with some overlap in the age ranges they cater for. Visit [Health.vic website](#) for locations and more information.

Acute in-patient services

In-hospital services offer short-term assessment and inpatient treatment for children and young people who have a severe emotional disturbance that cannot be assessed satisfactorily or treated safely and effectively within the community.

Mental health inpatient services are usually located within general hospitals and young people from rural areas can be connected to these. Find out more on [Health.vic website](#).

Aged mental health services

Mental health services are available to treat the elderly, predominantly people who are over the age of 65, who are experiencing severe and enduring mental illness.

Victorian Government services also cater for mental illnesses such as depression or psychosis, as well as people with psychiatric or severe behavioural difficulties associated with mental disorders such as dementia. Most services are provided in community clinics.

Aged Persons Mental Health (APMH) nursing homes and hostels

APMH nursing homes and hostels care for people who are not able to live in mainstream aged care residential services because of their mental illness. The facilities are designed to have a ‘homely’ atmosphere, and residents are encouraged to join in with a wide range of activities.

Acute inpatient services

Acute inpatient services provide short-term mental health treatment during an acute phase of a mental illness until the person can be access treatment living in the community. These services are located within aged care facilities and general hospitals.

Mental Health Community Support Services

Mental Health Community Support Services are managed by non-government organisations. They provide assistance with daily activities and help people to live successfully in the community. These services will be transitioned in part to the **National Disability Insurance Scheme** over the next years to support access to community programs for people whose disability has developed as part of a mental illness.

Where to get help

- Your GP (doctor)
- Your counsellor
- Your local hospital

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