



**PALM TREE
COVERING**

PALM TREE PRACTICAL GUIDE

Finding Mental Health Support in Victoria

Know where to start. Understand your choices.
Take the next step with confidence.

A plain-language guide for community members, families and supporters

Services and contact details verified September 2026

Together We CARE. Together We Connect.

Start Here

Match the support to what is happening now

You do not need to know the perfect service

Start with the level of support that best matches the situation. A service can help redirect you if another pathway is more suitable.

1

EARLY OR ONGOING SUPPORT

- The person is worried, stressed, low or not coping as usual.
- Daily life, sleep, relationships, work or study may be affected.
- Start with a GP, Medicare Mental Health, a local community service, headspace for ages 12-25, or a Mental Health and Wellbeing Local for adults aged 26+ where available.

2

NEEDS PROMPT PROFESSIONAL SUPPORT

- Distress is getting worse, functioning has reduced, or current support is not enough.
- Contact a GP, mental health clinician, Medicare Mental Health, local mental health service or crisis counselling service for advice.
- Ask what to do while waiting and what signs mean help should become urgent.

3

IMMEDIATE DANGER OR URGENT SAFETY CONCERN

- Someone may act on suicidal thoughts, has made an attempt, is at immediate risk of serious harm, or cannot stay safe.
- Call 000 or go to the nearest hospital emergency department. Stay with the person if it is safe for you. Follow emergency-service instructions.

CARE REMINDER

Connect and create safety. Ask and understand. Respond with compassion. Engage support.

Understanding Services

What different mental health supports can and cannot do

Different services have different roles

Cost, eligibility, waiting time and referral requirements can change. Ask the service before booking and request an interpreter if needed.

SERVICE	WHAT IT DOES	HOW TO ACCESS
GP	A first point for health concerns. Can discuss symptoms, physical health, medication and referral options.	Book directly. Fees vary. Ask about bulk billing and Medicare rebates.
Psychologist	Provides psychological assessment and therapy. Does not prescribe medication.	Private self-referral may be possible. A GP referral may support Medicare rebates.
Psychiatrist	A medical specialist who can diagnose, prescribe medication and provide specialist treatment.	A GP referral is usually needed for a Medicare rebate. Fees and waits vary.
Counsellor	Provides supportive counselling for life difficulties and emotional concerns. Training and professional registration can vary.	A GP referral is usually not required. Ask about qualifications, fees and approach.
Mental Health and Wellbeing Local	Free treatment, care and support for Victorians aged 26+ in participating areas, including co-occurring alcohol and drug needs.	Contact the local provider. Availability and service offerings vary by location.
headspace	Mental health, physical health, alcohol and other drug, and work or study support for young people aged 12-25.	Contact a local centre or eheadspace. Confirm local access and fees.
Medicare Mental Health	Helps people understand options and locate free or low-cost local support.	Call 1800 595 212 on weekdays, 8:30 am-5:00 pm, excluding public holidays.
Emergency department / 000	For immediate danger, serious injury or urgent safety concerns.	Call 000 or attend the nearest emergency department.

Preparing to Ask for Help

A little preparation can make the first contact easier

Before the appointment

You do not need to tell your whole story at once. Bring only what is useful and share at a pace that feels manageable.

BRING OR WRITE DOWN

- What has changed and how it affects daily life.
- When it started and whether it is getting better or worse.
- Current medicines, health conditions and recent tests.
- Supports already tried and what helped or did not help.
- Your preferred language, interpreter needs and access needs.
- Two or three questions you most want answered.

ASK THE SERVICE

- What does this service provide?
- Is a referral required?
- What will it cost and is there a Medicare rebate?
- How long is the wait?
- Can you arrange a qualified interpreter?
- What happens to my information?
- What should I do if things become urgent while waiting?

What usually happens next

- FIRST CONTACT**
 A worker may ask why you are seeking help, your contact details, safety concerns, language needs and what support you want.
- INTAKE OR APPOINTMENT**
 The service decides whether it can meet your needs, gathers relevant information and explains options.
- PLAN OR REFERRAL**
 You may receive an appointment, brief support, a referral, information for while you wait, or advice to contact a more suitable service.
- FOLLOW-UP**
 Ask who will contact whom, by when, and what to do if you do not hear back. Keep a note of the agreed next step.

IF THE FIRST SERVICE IS NOT THE RIGHT FIT

Ask why, request another option, and ask what support is available while you wait. You can also contact Medicare Mental Health for navigation help.

Privacy, Choice and Interpreters

Clear communication is part of safe and respectful care

You can ask questions and express preferences

Services should explain what they offer, how information is handled and what choices are available. Exact rights and processes vary by service and situation.

PRIVACY AND CONFIDENTIALITY

- Ask who can see your information and whether anything will be shared with another service.
- Confidentiality can have limits when there is an immediate safety concern, a legal requirement or a child-safety duty.
- Ask the worker to explain any limit in plain language.

CHOICE AND PARTICIPATION

- Ask what options are available and what each option may involve.
- Tell the service about cultural, faith, family, gender or accessibility needs that matter to you.
- You can ask for information in writing or request more time to decide when the situation is not urgent.

QUALIFIED INTERPRETERS

- Ask for your preferred language and dialect. You can also discuss interpreter gender and community-connection concerns.
- Do not automatically rely on children, relatives or friends for sensitive mental health conversations.
- Ask whether the service covers the interpreter cost. Eligibility varies.

WHO IS RESPONSIBLE

- The interpreter supports accurate communication and should interpret what is said.
- The qualified clinician remains responsible for clinical screening, assessment, treatment, safety planning and risk management.
- Speak to the person, not about them, and pause regularly to check understanding.

USEFUL WORDS

Confidentiality:	rules about keeping information private
Referral:	a request for another service to consider providing support
Intake:	the first information-gathering step
Consent:	freely agreeing after receiving understandable information

Helping Someone Take the Next Step

Support their choices without taking over

Use CARE to support help-seeking

A warm connection means helping someone move from information to an actual next step, with their agreement wherever possible.

C

CONNECT AND CREATE SAFETY

Choose a calm moment. Explain what you have noticed and why you care.

A

ASK AND UNDERSTAND

Ask what support they want, what has made help difficult and what would make a service feel safer.

R

RESPOND WITH COMPASSION

Offer choices. Respect the person's pace unless immediate safety requires urgent action.

E

ENGAGE SUPPORT

Help make the call, complete a form, arrange an interpreter, plan transport or attend if invited.

MY WARM CONNECTION PLAN

The support I want right now:

The service or person I will contact:

Who can help me make contact:

Language, interpreter or cultural needs:

Practical barriers to plan for - cost, transport, childcare or time:

My next step and when I will take it:

FOLLOW-UP

Agree on when to check in again. Ask what happened, what was helpful and whether another pathway is needed.

Family Violence and Family Wellbeing Support

Safety, family pressures and mental wellbeing can be connected

Some distress is connected with feeling unsafe at home, controlling behaviour, parenting pressure or concern about a child. The most suitable first step may be family or family-violence support as well as mental health support.

THE ORANGE DOOR

Free Victorian help for people experiencing or using family violence, and families needing support with children's care and wellbeing. No referral is required. Find your local service by suburb or postcode.

orangedoor.vic.gov.au/support-near-you

SAFE STEPS VICTORIA

Confidential, specialist crisis support for anyone in Victoria who is experiencing or afraid of family violence. Available 24 hours a day, every day.

Call 1800 015 188

1800RESPECT

National domestic, family and sexual violence counselling, information and support. Available 24 hours by phone, text and online.

Call 1800 737 732 | Text 0458 737 732

BEFORE HELPING SOMEONE MAKE CONTACT

Ask what feels safe. Do not call, text, email or search for a family-violence service in front of a person who may be using violence, or through a device that may be monitored. Do not assume family or community involvement is safe. If someone is in immediate danger, call Triple Zero 000.

RIGHT SERVICE, RIGHT ROLE

These services support safety and family wellbeing. They are not general mental health treatment services, although they may connect people with mental health and other supports.



Victoria Quick Directory

Use official service finders because local details can change

Where to begin

These pathways were checked in September 2026. Confirm operating hours, eligibility, cost and local availability before relying on printed details.

IMMEDIATE DANGER

000

Police, fire or ambulance when life or safety is in immediate danger.

LIFELINE

13 11 14 | Text 0477 13 11 14

24/7 crisis support by phone, text and online chat.

SUICIDE CALL BACK SERVICE

1300 659 467

Free professional phone and online counselling, 24/7.

SUICIDELINE VICTORIA

1300 651 251

Free professional phone and online counselling for people in Victoria, 24/7.

MEDICARE MENTAL HEALTH

1800 595 212

Free navigation help for mental health information and free or low-cost local services. Weekdays 8:30 am-5:00 pm, excluding public holidays.

KIDS HELPLINE

1800 55 1800

24/7 counselling for young people aged 5-25.

13YARN

13 92 76

24/7 crisis support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

OFFICIAL SERVICE FINDERS



**Victorian Mental Health and Wellbeing
Locals**
Free support for adults aged 26+ in
participating areas.



Medicare Mental Health
Find mental health information and local
services.

Keep this page with the guide when printing

Write down service details, appointment information or follow-up actions.

- Victorian Department of Health - Mental Health and Wellbeing Locals
- Australian Government - Medicare Mental Health and Services Australia
- Healthdirect Australia - mental health services and urgent support
- Lifeline, Suicide Call Back Service, SuicideLine Victoria, headspace and Kids Helpline

Together We CARE. Together We Connect.

Victoria help-seeking sources

Official information reviewed 26 September 2026

Victorian Department of Health

Mental Health and Wellbeing Locals

[Visit official source](#)

Medicare Mental Health

National phone service and local services

[Visit official source](#)

Healthdirect Australia

Mental health services and treatment plans

[Visit official source](#)

Lifeline Australia

24/7 crisis support and text options

[Visit official source](#)

Suicide Call Back Service

24/7 counselling and official contact details

[Visit official source](#)

Kids Helpline

Support for children and young people

[Visit official source](#)

13YARN

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander crisis support

[Visit official source](#)

Service eligibility, availability and phone details can change. Verify before sharing.

Education and navigation information only; no diagnosis, counselling or crisis care.