

# Victorian Alcohol and Other Drug Treatment Services Sector Reform

## Frequently Asked Questions

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## Why did the Victorian Government reform the alcohol and drug treatment sector?

The changes to the alcohol and drug treatment system were made in response to some of the problems highlighted in a number of reviews, including a report in March 2011 by the Victorian Auditor General's Office which found that the previous system was difficult for new clients to access and confusing for existing clients to navigate.

Clients also reported that the system didn't take the needs of their whole family into account, particularly children, nor did it provide pathways for clients and their families to gain access to other services and supports.

## How will these changes impact on me or someone I know?

The Victorian Government emphasises that the sector reforms were introduced in order to improve treatment for clients by taking a person centred and family inclusive approach.

Some of the key features of the new system include:

- A central intake service has been implemented to make it easier for people to access the support they need. This telephone based service helps people work out what type of treatment they might require and what the next step will be. You can contact Directline on 1800 888 236
- There are also intake and assessment units in each local catchment which assist clients to access local services that meet their needs. These intake and assessment points work with the client to develop a care plan for their whole treatment journey. A list of intake and assessment agencies and contact details is provided at [www.vicaodsector.org.au](http://www.vicaodsector.org.au)
- There has been a change in who provides alcohol and drug treatment in some locations
- Previous treatment types have been reduced to six different streams. Each of these are discussed below

If you are already in contact with an agency as either an existing service user or a family member, please make time to discuss these changes with your service provider to determine how the reforms may affect you and how your needs will be met in the future.

If you are not currently engaged with an agency, you can access services by contacting the intake and assessment unit in your local catchment.

Alternatively, you may wish to contact the state wide central intake and assessment service by phoning **Directline on 1800 888 236**.

## What services are available?

Alcohol and drug treatment services have been consolidated into six core service types:

- Intake and Assessment
- Counselling
- Care and Recovery
- Withdrawal
- Residential Rehabilitation
- Pharmacotherapy

### Intake and Assessment

A new, centralised model for screening and referral has been set up to improve access and direct people towards the services that can best meet their needs.

Clients who are accessing alcohol and drug treatment services for the first time are encouraged to contact the central state wide access point by calling Directline on 1800 888 236. Directline can provide referral pathways into treatment services, as well as a suite of self-directed support options for people who don't want face-to face treatment.

Alternatively, clients can access local treatment services through their regional intake and assessment service. See [www.vicaodsector.org.au](http://www.vicaodsector.org.au) for a list of intake and assessment services and contact details.

It is hoped that this coordinated model of intake and assessment will encourage a more consistent approach and reduce the need for clients to tell their story multiple times.

### Counselling

Where the catchment-based intake and assessment unit assesses a person as needing counselling, they will be referred for this service. Counselling may incorporate face-to-face, online and telephone counselling for individuals and families, as well as group counselling and day programs.

Counselling can range from a single session to extended periods of one-to-one engagement or group work.

## Care and Recovery

There are Care and Recovery Coordinators in each of the 16 catchments to facilitate and support clients when accessing the services they need.

Care and Recovery includes coordination of treatment planning and goal setting, supported referral to those services the person is assessed as needing, and ongoing support. The duration and intensity of this service varies from person to person, depending on their level of need and the supports they already have in place.

## Withdrawal

Withdrawal services previously comprised home-based, outpatient, rural and residential withdrawal. The new Withdrawal stream consolidates these into two subcategories: residential and non-residential withdrawal services.

Residential services are designed for people with complex needs or for those whose family and accommodation circumstances are unsuited to non-residential withdrawal.

Non-residential withdrawal provides safe and supported management of withdrawal in coordination with medical services such as hospitals and general practitioners.

Please note that residential withdrawal services will be redeveloped in Stage 2 of the reform process, but can still be accessed through current intake and assessment service arrangements.

## Residential Rehabilitation

Residential Rehabilitation provides a safe and supported environment for people who are not able to reduce or overcome their drug dependence through other programs. It provides a range of interventions, such as individual and group counselling with an emphasis on mutual self-help and peer community, and supported reintegration into the community.

Residential rehabilitation services are part of the second stage of reform planned to occur in the near future.

## Pharmacotherapy

The Pharmacotherapy stream was the first of the six streams to undergo reform.

With over 14,000 people in Victoria currently using pharmacotherapy to address their drug dependence, this service is making a substantial contribution to reducing the harms associated with drug use.

The first key phase of the reform involved the establishment of five pharmacotherapy area-based networks across Victoria to connect GPs, Pharmacists and alcohol and drug treatment services. There are also new training providers for doctors and pharmacists, and it is hoped that this will encourage more providers to become prescribers and dispensers. Further information about the pharmacotherapy reforms can be found at <http://www.health.vic.gov.au/aod/pharm>

### **How do the 16 catchments operate?**

There are 9 metropolitan and 7 regional catchments in the new system. Maps can be found at [www.vicaodsector.org.au](http://www.vicaodsector.org.au)

There is an intake and assessment unit in each catchment and the closest one will depend on where you live or spend most of your time.

Ensuring that rural Victorians are able to access treatment, despite living further away from regional centres, was an important consideration in determining how services were set up across catchments.

Catchments will not be used to determine eligibility or exclusion criteria for services. It is expected that service users will move across catchment boundaries and this should not act as a barrier to accessing treatment

### **How will my family and significant others be included in my treatment?**

The AOD workforce has improved understanding of family-inclusive practice and will continue to build their skills to involve family members and respond to the needs of children. It is acknowledged that engaging families and other important people in treatment delivers better outcomes. This includes ensuring families also have the support they need.

Family members need to receive better information and support. It is hoped that the changes will improve information for parents and carers about how to respond to a child's substance use.

AOD services will continue to work with other sectors including child and family services, child protection and mental health services to build knowledge and skills to recognise and respond more effectively to substance use concerns for parents and children.

## **Are Aboriginal services affected by the reforms?**

Whilst Aboriginal services were not part of the recommissioning process, the roles, functions and deliverables of these services have changed to reflect the reform agenda.

Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations (ACCHOs) will remain an important part of the alcohol and drug treatment pathway for many Aboriginal people. Importantly, ACCHOs will play a role in ensuring mainstream services connect with and support stronger treatment pathways for Aboriginal people.

All mainstream services are expected to provide culturally accessible treatment for Aboriginal people.

## **I'm a member of a group that is currently under represented in treatment. How will these reforms affect me?**

Such groups include culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD), gay, lesbian, bi, transgender, intersex (GLBTI), older people, and people with a disability

The system is being promoted as client centred and this requires that the needs of individuals are met through a tailored assessment and treatment matching process. A person-centred service takes account of a person's family and cultural circumstances and considers any other needs or supports they require.

Our workforce priorities include a focus on culturally safe and inclusive practices. Depending on local community needs, care and recovery coordinators may work with communities that are underrepresented in treatment or that have particular support needs.

## **How will treatment services ensure that my private information is protected through the system changes?**

Many agencies now have their own data systems in place utilising a variety of software packages that can deliver the data that the Victorian Government requires. They also have systems in place to store and retrieve client information in a manner that adheres to legal privacy and confidentiality requirements.

All client records will be maintained by agencies as required by law. It is essential that clients are aware of who their personal information is shared with and that they have the right to stop this information from being provided to others, unless required by law.

Organisations that have ceased AOD service delivery were required to speak with their clients prior to 1 September 2014 to discuss transition to a new provider in their catchment. This includes discussions about consent to provide the new service with a copy of client records.

If any client has concerns about how their personal information has been shared, they should speak to the treatment agency or call the **Health Services Commissioner on 1300 582 113**

### **How will this affect youth AOD services?**

The youth system is expected to be recommissioned after the adult non-residential system in the proposed stage two reforms.

### **Where can I get more information?**

For general and confidential information regarding alcohol and drug counselling and referral, contact **Directline on 1800 888 236**.

If you are an existing service user or a family member, please make time to discuss these changes with your service provider to determine how the reforms may affect you or someone you know and how your needs will be met in the future.

If you have a question that hasn't been answered in our FAQs section and you require further information about sector reform, please call our information line during business hours on **1800 77 14 00**.

You may also wish to visit the Victorian Government website at <http://www.health.vic.gov.au/aod/reform/index.htm> to access announcements, Fact Sheets, Bulletins, Summary Papers, Ministerial Communiques and more.