Ballarat Youth Mental Health Service and Referral Guide

headspace Ballarat

Youth Suicide Prevention Project

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An Australian Government Initiative

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Acknowledgements

headspace Ballarat recognise and celebrate the diversity of the community within which we work. We acknowledge and respect the Wadawurrung people as the Traditional Custodians of lands that this community consultation was conducted. We value their cultures, identities, and continuing connection to country, waters, kin, and community. We pay our respects to Elders past, present, and to emerging leaders, and are committed to making a positive contribution to the wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people, by providing services that are welcoming, safe, culturally appropriate, and inclusive.

headspace Ballarat would like to acknowledge those that may have a lived or living experience of suicide or may be experiencing bereavement due to losing a loved one to suicide.

We thank all participants identifying with such experiences for their strength in being part of this consultation and acknowledge that their voice is of great importance to the outcome of this project.

Resource Overview

The Ballarat Youth Mental Health Service and Referral Guide should be used in conjunction with the *'Where can you go for Mental Health Support in Ballarat'* resource developed by headspace Ballarat.

Both resources aim to help young people and their carers to navigate the mental health system in Ballarat. The Ballarat Youth Mental Health Service and Referral Guide is targeted at services that work with young people in the Ballarat Community and provides a list of mental health services available in Ballarat, detailing the programs offered and the referral processes for each service.

Background

Following headspace Ballarat's Youth Suicide Prevention Projects Community Insights consultation, it was identified that the diversity of the youth mental health sector in Ballarat makes aligning referral pathways, program scopes, and boundaries challenging for both consumers and professionals.

To address this, the Australian Government's Initial Assessment and Referral Decision Support Tool (IAR-DST) was used to map the sector, providing general alignment and a common language across programs and agencies. Each agency represented identified and interpreted their own contracted service provision level of care using the IAR-DST supporting documentation as a guide and provided information regarding program scope and referral pathways.

Where can you go for mental health support in Ballarat?

This resource was developed as a guide for young people and their carers to help identify the appropriate level of care needed and locating local supports that provide this care.

From inception to publication the headspace Ballarat Youth Reference Group (YRG) were heavily consulted on all aspects of the resource including design, language and usability and their insights and guidance was invaluable to the project.

Following this consultation blind evaluations were conducted with the City of Ballarat's Youth Ambassadors and The Y Ballarat's Youth Advisory and Acton Board to ensure the youth facing component of this project was easy to use and fit for purpose.

Finally, the resource was trialled using case studies in a Service Navigation Workshop consisting of young people, parents and carers, non-wellbeing professionals (teachers, youth group facilitators) and wellbeing professionals to test its efficacy in determining approximate levels of care required by each case study matched IAR-DST scores.

Service Quick List

A concise overview detailing which services provide specific levels of care within their programs. This summary enables quicker identification of service levels and facilitates easier use of the Service and Referral List.

Service and Referral List

A list of mental health services available in Ballarat, complete with contact details and referral pathways. Most programs are free of charge and accessible without the need for a GP referral.

Care was taken to ensure information in this list is accurate at time of publication but due to the ever-changing nature of the mental health sector, as time passes this information may require amendment and updating.

IAR-DST

The IAR Decision Support Tool and Guidance documentation, developed for Australian health professionals in the primary mental health system, supports consistent, evidence-informed initial assessment and referral processes. As new evidence emerges, it will be refined. Details on support levels are on page 21 of this document, and the tool and all supporting documentation can be found at https://iar-dst.online/#/ .

We recommend that where practical, services supporting clients with mental health difficulties consider adopting the IAR-DST to enhance referral efficiency and improve client outcomes.

Update and Replication of this Project.

Due to the ever-changing environment that mental health services inhabit this document will require periodic update and review. Should headspace Ballarat or the Youth Suicide Prevention Project not be best placed to complete such review, we openly invite other organisations to update where necessary.

A ‘how to guide’ for this project has been developed to allow for easier update or replication of this project post the end date of the headspace Ballarat Youth Suicide Prevention Project or in other service areas across the country.

Please email yspp@headspaceballarat.org.au or info@headspaceballarat.org.au to request a copy of this guide.

headspace Ballarat

telephone and online mental health services

eheadspace: 1800 650 890
eheadspace.org.au/online-and-phone-support/
Online and phone support service for young people between 12 and 25

Beyond Blue: 1300 224 636
beyondblue.org.au
Anyone feeling anxious or depressed

Lifeline: 13 11 14
lifeline.org.au
For anyone in crisis

Kids Helpline: 1800 551 800
kidshelpline.com.au
Counselling for young people aged 5 - 25

Suicide Call Back Service: 1300 659 467
suicidecallbackservice.org.au
For anyone thinking about suicide

SuicideLine Victoria: 1300 651 251
suicideline.org.au
Free 24/7 professional telephone counselling

StandBy Support After Suicide: 1300 727 247
For anyone bereaved or impacted by suicide

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander: 13 92 76
13yarn.org.au
24/7 Crisis support

LGBTIQ+: 1800 184 527
qlife.org.au
Free LGBTIQ+ peer support and referral

Rainbow Door:
Call: 1800 729 367 or Text: 0480 017 246
rainbowdoor.org.au
Rainbow Door is a free specialist LGBTIQA+ helpline providing information, support, and referral to all LGBTIQA+ Victorians, their friends and family

Culturally Diverse: embracementalhealth.org.au
For anyone from a migrant or refugee background

Eating Disorders Victoria: 1300 550 236
eatingdisorders.org.au
The Hub is a free and confidential service providing information and peer support for people experiencing eating disorders or those who are supporting them (family, friends, professionals etc.)

Anxiety Recovery Centre Victoria (ARCVic):
1300 269 438 or 03 9830 0533
arcvic.org.au
A state-wide, specialist mental health organisation, providing support, recovery and educational services to people and families living with anxiety disorders.

is it an emergency?

If you or someone you know are in immediate risk of harm Call OOO

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headspace Ballarat

where can you go for mental health support in ballarat?

know your options:

find the right mental health support in Ballarat

This guide aims to help young people, families and their carers navigate the mental health system in Ballarat.

Think about what is happening for you at the moment and use the chart below to help decide the level of support that fits you. Once you have found the level for you, you can find services that offer that support on the next page.

If possible, try using this guide with a friend or trusted adult

It can help you build your support network and make it easier to get the help you need.

1 Minor Mental Health Difficulties

- You are feeling good and would like to maintain it
- You are having a 'bad day', or something minor is impacting you and you need something to do while it passes
- You can mostly manage the feelings yourself, but you may need the help of a trusted adult or an online resource

2 Mild Mental Health Difficulties

- There is a mild change to how you are sleeping, eating, socialising, or completing daily tasks (trouble falling asleep, small loss of motivation)
- You are having negative thoughts or feelings causing mild levels of distress
- Difficulties are not resolving naturally and may have been bothering you for a short period of time (less than 6 months)

3 Moderate Mental Health Difficulties

- There is a moderate change to how you are sleeping, eating, socialising, or completing daily tasks (poor sleep a few nights a week, hard to find motivation, avoiding some social situations)
- You are having negative thoughts or feelings causing moderate levels of distress
- Difficulties may have been going for a while (up to 6 months or more)

4 Significant Mental Health Difficulties

- There is a significant change to how you are sleeping, eating, socialising, or completing daily tasks (unable to sleep some nights, no motivation at all, avoiding all social situations)
- You are having negative thoughts or feelings causing significant levels of distress
- Difficulties may have been going for longer than 6 months

5 Acute Mental Health Difficulties

- There is a very high risk of you harming yourself or others
- Unable to complete daily activities at all or severe difficulties across several areas of your life

Mental Health Emergency (Call 000)

- Immediate risk of harm to self or others needing immediate intervention

You might not find your exact experiences here, but this guide will help you get closer to finding the best support for you.

So where can I go for support?

- Below is a list of mental health services in Ballarat and the level of support they can provide you.
- All of the services below offer free programs for young people.
- Remember not all services will be suited to everyone, so it is important that you keep trying until you find the one for you.
- Don't forget your General Practitioner (GP) can help you too.

	1 Minor	2 Mild	3 Moderate	4 Significant	5 Acute	Emergency	
School Wellbeing School wellbeing office	●	●					Visit your school wellbeing office
Catholic Care Intake, assessment, general counselling for mild to moderate mental health	●	●					P: 1800 123 228 or 03 5337 8999 W: catholiccarevic.org.au
QHub Mental health and wellbeing services tailored specifically for LGBTIQA+ young people and their families	●	●	●				P: 1800542847 W: queerspace.org.au/our-programs/safe-spaces
BADAC First nations physical and mental health support services	●	●	●				P: 03 5331 5344 W: badac.net.au
FedCare Psychology Services Psychological services for the Ballarat community	●	●	●				P: 03 5327 8483 W: federation.edu.au
headspace Ballarat Free mental health support for young people	●	●	●	●			P: 03 5304 4777 W: headspace.org.au/headspace centres/ballarat
Ballarat Community Health Physical and mental health support services	●	●	●	●			P: 03 5338 4500 W: bchc.org.au
Uniting Free counselling, assessment and referral for mental health challenges		●	●	●			P: 03 5332 1286 W: unitingvictas.org.au/locations/ballarat-105-dana-street/
Head to Health Free advice, assessment, and referral into local mental health services			●	●			P: 1800 595 212 or 5338 4500 W: headtohealth.gov.au
Grampians Health 24/7 referrals to the Grampians Area Mental Health Service					●		P: 1300 247 647 W: grampianshealth.org.au
Emergency Services (000) For immediate support if you or someone else is in danger						●	P: 000

If you need to speak to someone urgently, please call Lifeline on 13 11 14 or Kids helpline 1800 55 1800.

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The headspace Ballarat Youth Suicide Prevention Project is funded by the Western Victoria Primary Health Netwok

Service Quick List

Organisation	Program	1 Minor	2 Mild	3 Moderate	4 Significant	5 Acute	Emergency
School Wellbeing		●	●				
Catholic Care	Counselling Services **fees may apply	●	●				
QHub	QHub under 12's Drop-in Program	●					
	QHub 12-17's Drop-in Program	●					
	QHub 18-25's Drop-in Program	●					
	QHub 18-25's Out Socials Program	●					
	QHub – Peer Work		●				
	QHub – Youth and Family Practitioner			●			
BADAC	Youth Mental Health Program	●	●	●			
	SEWB Mental Health	●	●	●			
	Keela Borron Parental Mental Health Project	●	●	●			
	Cultural Care Connect Aftercare program			●			
	Cultural Support	●	●	●			
	Alcohol & Other Drugs	●	●	●			
	Psychological Treatment Services Adult and Children	●	●	●			
Federation University	Immediate Response Mental Health Support Line 24/7	●	●				
	Talk Campus	●					
	Student Psychology and Counselling (PAC) Services	●	●				
	FedCare Psychology Services		●	●			
headspace Ballarat	Headspace Core Program	●	●	●			
	Headspace Enhancing Mental Health Supports in Schools	●	●	●			
	Peer Work	●	●	●	●		
	Headspace Parent and Carer Peer Navigator	●	●	●	●		
	Headspace Specialist Youth Program				●		
Ballarat Community Health	Connecting2Communities	●	●	●	●		
	Step Thru Care	●	●	●	●		
	Alcohol and Other Drug Youth Outreach	●	●	●	●		
	Forensic Mental Health in Community Health Services (FMHICH)				●		
	Head to Heath			●	●		
Berry Street	Therapeutic Life Story Work (TLSW)		●	●			
	Take Two			●			
Uniting	Youth Residential Rehabilitation			●	●		
	Youth Outreach Recovery Services			●	●		
	Mental Health HUB			●	●		
	Youth Outreach and Support		●	●			
Head to Health	Head to Health			●	●		
Grampians Health	Access and Triage					●	
Emergency Services	Emergency Services (000)						●

Service and Referral List

Below is a list of mental health services available in Ballarat, complete with contact details and referral pathways. Most programs are free of charge and accessible without the need for a GP referral.

Catholic Care

Intake, assessment, general counselling for mild to moderate mental health difficulties.

Address: 34 Peel St Nth, Ballarat, VIC, 3350

Phone: 03 5337 8999 or 03 5327 7900

Website: catholiccarevic.org.au

Opening Hours:

Monday 9am – 5pm

Tuesday 9am – 5pm

Wednesday 9am – 8pm

Thursday 9am – 5pm

Friday 9am – 5pm

Programs:

Program Name	Program Aim	Age Range	Service Level	Referral Pathways and Exclusions	Fee for Service
Counselling Services	Intake, assessment, general counselling for mild to moderate mental health; internal referral to group program	12-25		Self or external agency referral; AOD issues not accepted	**fees may apply

QHub

Mental health and wellbeing services tailored specifically for LGBTIQA+ young people and their families

Address: by appointment

Phone: 1800 LGBTIQA (1800 542847)

Email: qhub@ds.org.au

Website: queerspace.org.au/our-programs/safe-spaces/

Opening Hours*:

Monday 10am – 6pm

Tuesday 10am – 6pm

Wednesday 10am – 6pm

Thursday 10am – 6pm

Friday 9am – 5pm

*by appointment

Programs:

Program Name	Program Aim	Age Range	Service Level	Referral Pathways and Exclusions	Fee for Service
QHub under 12's Drop-in Program	Social Connection	Up to 12		Walk-ins, no appt required, YP's can register.	Free
QHub 12-17's Drop-in Program	Social Connection	12 - 17		Walk-ins, no appt required, YP's can register.	Free
QHub 18-25's Drop-in Program	Social Connection	18 - 25		Walk-ins, no appt required, YP's can register.	Free
QHub 18-25's Out Socials Program	Social Connection	18 - 25		Registrations with peer worker	Free
QHub – Peer Work	Peer Support – Counselling – Referrals	Up to 25		Internal, External, Self-refer.	Free
QHub – Youth and Family Practitioner	Youth and Family Support – Counselling – Referrals	Up to 25		Internal, External, Self-refer.	Free

BADAC

Ballarat and District Aboriginal Co-operative offer First Nations physical and mental health support services.

Address: 108 Armstrong Street Nth Ballarat VIC, 3350

Phone: 03 5331 5344

Website: badac.net.au

Opening Hours:

Monday 9am – 5pm

Tuesday 9am – 5pm

Wednesday 9am – 5pm

Thursday 9am – 5pm

Friday 9am – 4pm

Programs:

Program Name	Program Aim	Age Range	Service Level	Referral Pathways and Exclusions	Fee for Service
Youth Mental Health Program	Intake, assessment, counselling for First Nations youth	6 - 17		Self, G.P and professional referrals	Free
SEWB Mental Health	Intake, assessment, support counselling, therapy for First Nations peoples'	18 - 64+		Self, G.P and professional referrals	Free
Keela Borron Parental Mental Health Project	Improve mental health outcomes for children and parents involved in child protection	Parents of First Nations children aged. 16+		Referral pathway through SEWB clinical assessment and referral	Free
Cultural Care Connect Aftercare program	Psychosocial support, screening assessment, Cultural and Safety planning.	6 - 64+		Referral pathway through SEWB clinical assessment and referral	Free
Cultural Support	Psychosocial support, screening assessment and Cultural planning.	6 - 64+		Referral pathway through SEWB clinical assessment	Free
Alcohol & Other Drugs	Assessment, counselling, education, and referral.	16 - 64+ Or under 16 with parent/guardian consent.		Self, G.P and professional referrals	Free
Psychological Treatment Services Adult and Children	Psychological support and counselling. Brief Intervention up to 12 weeks.	16 - 64+		Referral pathway through SEWB to Federation University.	Free

FedCare Psychology Services

Psychological services for the Ballarat Community.

Address: Suite 4, Greenhill Enterprise Centre (GEC)
Mt Helen Campus, Tech Park,
University Drive Mount Helen VIC, 3350

Phone: 03 5327 8483

Email: psychology.services@federation.edu.au

Website: federation.edu.au

Opening Hours:

Monday - closed

Tuesday 9am – 5pm

Wednesday 9am – 5pm

Thursday 9am – 5pm

Friday 9am – 5pm

Programs:

Program Name	Program Aim	Age Range	Service Level	Referral Pathways and Exclusions	Fee for Service
Immediate Response Mental Health Support Line 24/7	Provides counselling support for Federation University Students located in Australia	15+		Nil referrals, self-initiated	Free
Talk Campus	Offers 24/7mental health peer support for students. Also provides self-learning modules for students.	17+		Nil referrals, self initiated by students currently enrolled in Federation University course with University email account to access service	Free
Student Psychology and Counselling (PAC) Services	Provide short term Intervention therapy no more than 6 sessions. Non Crisis	15+		Self-referral by student currently enrolled in a Federation University Course	Free

FedCare Psychology Services	FedCare Psychology Services provides psychological services to members of community within Ballarat and surrounding districts.	5+		Referrals can be made by health professionals, teachers, local agencies and private or government-sponsored agencies. Alternatively, individuals (or guardians) can contact us directly to make a referral. Any referral for a cognitive assessment must provide a letter of support by a professional to explain why this person would benefit from an assessment. This letter may be written by a teacher, principle, paediatrician, GP, psychologist, OT, speech therapist or case worker Referrals and appointments can be made by telephone, post or email.	YES Initial consultations are free, and psychological treatment for adults and children cost $10 ($5 for concession card holders) Comprehensive Intellectual/Academic Assessment $450 ($275 Concession) if the client pays directly. $550 if an invoice is required for an organisation to pay.

headspace Ballarat

Free mental health support for young people aged 12 – 25.

Address: 28 Camp Street, Ballarat, VIC, 3350

Phone: 03 5304 4777

Website: headspace.org.au/headspace centres/ballarat

Opening Hours:

Monday 9am – 5pm

Tuesday 9am – 5pm

Wednesday 9am – 7pm

Thursday 9am – 7pm

Friday 9am – 4pm

Programs:

Program Name	Program Aim	Age Range	Service Level	Referral Pathways and Exclusions	Fee for Service
headspace Core Program	Providing drop-in intake, assessment, and treatment for mild to moderate mental health	12-25		Walk-ins to centre, no appointment needed. Online self and professional referrals	Free
headspace Specialist Youth Program	Intake, assessment, and treatment for complex presentations up to 6 months	12-25		Walk-ins to centre, no appointment needed. Online self and professional referrals	Free
headspace Enhancing Mental Health Supports in Schools	Those attending public schools, intake, assessment, and treatment for 6 sessions	12-25		Referral pathways only through participating schools	Free
headspace Peer Work	Psychosocial support up to 6 sessions to achieve specific goals	12-25		Internal Referrals	Free
headspace Parent and Carer Peer Navigator	Intake and service referral support for young person and parent	Parent of young Person aged 12-25		Internal Referrals or triaged via Customer Service Officers	Free

Ballarat Community Health

Physical and mental health support services.

Address:

Lucas: 12 Lilburne Street, Lucas, VIC, 3350

Wendouree: 1042 Howitt Street, Wendouree, VIC, 3355

Sebastopol: 260 Vickers Street, Sebastopol, VIC, 3356

Victoria Street: 28 Victoria Street, Ballarat, VIC, 3350

Cooinda Health & Wellbeing Hub: 10 Learmonth Road, Wendouree VIC, 3355

Phone: 03 5338 4500 **Fax:** 03 5336 1613

Website: bchc.org.au

Opening Hours:

Monday 8:30am – 5pm

Tuesday 8:30am – 5pm

Wednesday 8:30am – 5pm

Thursday 8:30am – 5pm

Friday 8:30am – 5pm

*Operating hours may vary between centres

Programs:

Program Name	Program Aim	Age Range	Service Level	Referral Pathways and Exclusions	Fee for Service
Connecting2 Communities	Psychosocial supports with a peer worker	18+		Walk ins to centre, Online self and professional referrals	Free
Forensic Mental Health in Community Health Services (FMHICH)	Address the gaps in mental health service provision which can lead to re-offending of people on community corrections orders	18+		Referrals via corrections	Free
Step Thru Care	Intake, assessment and treatment for presentations of individual AOD, individual MH and cooccurring AOD & MH.	5 - 25		Self-referral, GP referral, professional referrals.	Free
Alcohol and Other Drug Youth Outreach	Provides a holistic approach in supporting young people within a harm minimisation framework.	12 - 25		Self-referral, GP referral, professional referrals.	Free

Berry Street

Therapeutic services for children, young people and families.

Address: 23 Wetlands Drive Mount Helen, VIC 3350

Phone: 03 5330 5000 **Fax:** 03 5330 7771

Website: berrystreet.org.au

Opening Hours:

Monday 9am – 5pm

Tuesday 9am – 5pm

Wednesday 9am – 5pm

Thursday 9am – 5pm

Friday 9am – 5pm

Programs:

Program Name	Program Aim	Age Range	Service Level	Referral Pathways and Exclusions	Fee for Service
Therapeutic Life Story Work (TLSW)	Providing a dyadic therapeutic intervention to children and young people who have experienced early childhood trauma and their parent/guardian or carer to make sense of past experiences and support recovery from trauma, abuse or neglect.	6 - 18		Referral pathways through direct inquiry to tlswenquiries@berrystreet.org.au (the child must have a committed parent/carer/guardian to take part in regular sessions)	YES
Take Two	Berry Street's Take Two program is a Victoria-wide therapeutic service helping to address the impact on children of the trauma they have experienced from abuse, neglect or adverse experiences.	0 - 18		Referral pathways through Child Protection Principal Practitioner or https://www.berrystreet.org.au/enquiry-referral-form for Fee for Service or For students at the Berry Street School, the school can refer for psychological, speech, occupational therapy assessments or brief intervention to improve engagement at school	Free YES Free

Uniting

Free counselling, assessment and referral for mental health challenges.

Address: 105 Dana Street, Ballarat, VIC, 3350

Phone: 03 5332 1286

Website: unitingvictas.org.au/locations/ballarat-105-dana-street/

Opening Hours:

Monday 9am – 5pm

Tuesday 9am – 5pm

Wednesday 9am – 5pm

Thursday 9am – 5pm

Friday 9am – 5pm

Programs:

Program Name	Program Aim	Age Range	Service Level	Referral Pathways and Exclusions	Fee for Service
Youth Residential Recovery and Youth Outreach Recovery Services	YRRS are state-funded community mental health programs that provide accommodation and intensive psychosocial support to young people aged 16-25 who have significant mental health challenges. YORS is a supplementary model, introduced in 2021, to provide support to young people aged 16-25 years with mental health challenges pre and post entry to a YRRS and as an alternative to a YRRS placement.	16-25		ACSO Website	YRR - yes YORs - Free

Mental Health HUB	Provides mental health support for a range of different issues, including lowered mood, anxiety, substance use or addiction, or any distress.	18-100		Self/Other/Walk-in service at 105 Dana street Ph 53321286	Free
Youth outreach and support	Assessment, support and ongoing case coordination for young people in their own environment Support to address alcohol and other drug use issues. This is achieved through a family-based approach, where appropriate, that is integrated with other services including mental health, education, health, housing, and child protection and family services.	0-25		Self/Other/Walk-in service at 105 Dana street Ph 53321286	Free

Head to Health

Free advice, assessment, and referral into local mental health services.

Address: Any Ballarat Community Health site

Phone: 1800 595 212

Website: bchc.org.au/service/head-to-health

Opening Hours:

Monday 8am – 5pm

Tuesday 8am – 5pm

Wednesday 8am – 5pm

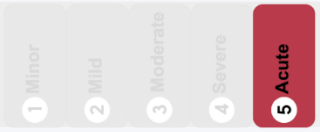
Thursday 8am – 5pm

Friday 8am – 5pm

Programs:

Program Name	Program Aim	Age Range	Service Level	Referral Pathways and Exclusions	Fee for Service
Head to Heath	Intake, assessment, and treatment for complex presentations up to 6 months	All ages		Walk ins to centre, Online self and professional referrals	Free

Grampians Health



The Access and Triage Service is the entry point for referrals to the Grampians Area Mental Health Service and is a 24-hour, 7-days-a-week, telephone referral service.

Address: 1 Drummond Street North, Ballarat, VIC, 3350

Opening Hours:

This is a 24 hour, 7 days-a-week telephone service.

Phone: 1300 247 647 **Fax:** 03 5320 4028

Website: bhs.org.au

Programs:

Program Name	Program Aim	Age Range	Service Level	Referral Pathways and Exclusions	Fee for Service
Access and Triage Service	The Access & Triage team provide 24/7 mental health telephone triage assessment for the entire Grampians region across all age groups. Grampians Area Mental Health Service - incorporating Ballarat Mental Health Services - is a specialist psychiatric service offering case management and treatment for people who are experiencing serious mental illness. Please note, we cannot provide support with Mental Health Care Plans or requests for Psychology services	All Ages		Anyone can contact the Access and Triage Service. Phone: 1300 247 647	Free

Initial Assessment and Referral Decision Support Tool v1.05

Level 1 (Self-Management)

Definition: services at this level of care are designed to prevent the onset of illness and are mostly focussed on supporting the person to self-manage any distress or symptoms. This level of care generally involves evidence-based digital therapies and other forms of self-help. A summary of the evidence-based digital mental health therapies and self-help services is available through the Head to Health website.

Care environment: services are easily accessible and available online, via telephone or in the community. Services may also be available in integrated settings (e.g., within schools, workplaces, and general practice).

Core clinical services:

This level of care is focussed on self-help activities. Clinical services are generally not required, however where they are involved, they should:

- Be focussed on monitoring, with capability to step up into other interventions as required.
- Include psychoeducation and information via a GP. The GP may also consider developing a MHTP (if consistent with Medicare Benefits Schedule).

Other clinical interventions that may be required:

- lifestyle interventions (e.g., nutrition, sleep, exercise, meaningful social connections), and
- group work.

Support services: additional services, if needed, are focussed on actively linking the person with services that can help to practically address any situational stressors (e.g., finances).

Referral criteria:

A person suitable for this level of care typically has no risk of harm, is usually experiencing mild symptoms and/or no distress/low levels of distress- which may be in response to recent social and environmental stressors. Symptoms have typically been present for a short period of time. The individual is generally functioning well and should be motivated to pursue self-management options. People experiencing a lack of motivation/engagement should not be referred to this level of care because these problems will work against involvement in self-management strategies. Additionally, Level 1 care is unlikely to be suitable for those with severe problems in their treatment/recovery history or very severe environmental stressors – each of these would usually trigger a referral to Level 3 care.

Level 2 (Low Intensity Services)

Definition: Low intensity services are designed to be accessed quickly (without the need for a formal referral e.g., through a third-party service or provider), easily (through a range of modalities including face-to-face, group work, telephone and digital interventions) and typically involve few or short sessions.

Care environment: services are easily accessible and available online, over the telephone or in the community. Services may also be available in integrated settings (e.g., within schools, workplaces, and general practice).

Core clinical services:

- Psychoeducation and information via a GP. The GP may also consider developing a MHTP (if consistent with Medicare Benefits Schedule).
- Evidence-based low intensity interventions (including online, telephone and face-to-face low intensity structured psychological services, or brief interventions delivered by mental health professionals).

Other clinical interventions that may be required:

- lifestyle interventions (e.g., nutrition, sleep, exercise, meaningful social connections).
- group work.

Support services: additional services, if needed, are focussed on actively linking the person with services that can help to practically address any situational stressors (e.g., finances).

Referral criteria:

A person suitable for this level of care typically has minimal or no risk factors, is usually experiencing mild symptoms/low levels of distress, and where present, this is likely to be in response to a stressful environment. Symptoms have typically been present for a short period of time (less than 6 months but this may vary). The individual is generally functioning well but may have problems with motivation or engagement that contraindicate a referral to Level 1 care. Where the person has experienced previous treatment for a previous episode, they are likely to have had a moderate or better recovery.

Complexity indicated by significant problems in Risk, Functioning or Co-existing Conditions should be considered as contraindications for referral to Level 2 care and trigger a referral to Level 3 or higher.

Level 3 (Moderate Intensity Services)

Definition: moderate intensity services generally provide structured, reasonably frequent, and intensive interventions (e.g., a defined number of psychological sessions delivered regularly)

Care environment: typically, community locations (e.g., consulting rooms), outreach into residential environments (e.g., aged care facilities, schools) or if appropriate, via telephone or videoconference (e.g., for people in remote communities), and clinician assisted e-therapies.

Core clinical services:

A comprehensive psychological assessment (if not already undertaken) is required for all individuals suited to this level of care.

- Evidence-based psychological interventions provided by a mental health clinician.
- Active GP management, mental health assessment (and development of a MHTP).

Other clinical interventions that may be required:

- community based psychiatry.
- clinical care coordination services within primary care (if more than 2 services are involved in providing care).

Support services: additional services, if needed, are focussed on:

- community supports (including peer support and social participation support).
- assistance to access support and advice relating to known environmental stressors.
- lifestyle interventions (e.g., nutrition, sleep, exercise, meaningful social connections).

Referral criteria:

A person requiring this level of care is likely to be experiencing mild to moderate symptoms/distress (that would meet criteria for a diagnosis). Symptoms have typically been present for 6 months or more (but this may vary). Initial assessment would usually indicate problems present in risk of harm, functioning or impact of co-existing conditions but not at very severe levels, which should trigger consideration of a referral to Level 5. People experiencing moderate to severe symptoms with mild to moderate problems associated with Risk, Functioning and Impact of Co-existing Conditions are usually suitable for this level of care.

Level 4 (High Intensity Services)

Definition: high intensity services including periods of intensive intervention that may involve multi-disciplinary support. Usually supporting people experiencing severe mental illness, significant functional impairment and/or risk factors.

Care environment: typically, face-to-face interventions in community locations (e.g., consulting rooms) or outreach to the person within their home or other environment.

Core clinical services:

A comprehensive psychological assessment (if not already undertaken) is required for all individuals suited to this level of care.

- Evidence-based psychological interventions provided by a mental health clinician.
- Clinical care coordination services within primary care (if more than 2 services are involved in providing care).
- Involvement of a mental health nurse.
- Community-based psychiatric care.
- Active GP management, mental health assessment, integrated physical health care (and development of a MHTP).

Support services: additional services are likely to be needed and may include:

- psycho-social disability support services (including peer support, daily living support, social skills training, and social participation support).
- community supports (including peer support and social participation support).
- assistance to access support and advice relating to known environmental stressors.
- lifestyle interventions (e.g., nutrition, sleep, exercise, meaningful social connections).

Referral criteria:

A person requiring this level of care usually has a diagnosed mental health condition with significant symptoms and/or significant problems with functioning. A person with a severe presentation is likely to be experiencing moderate or higher problems associated with Risk of Harm, Functioning, and Impact of Co-existing Conditions. Where problems are assessed as very severe in symptom, risk or functioning domains, a referral to Level 5 care should be considered.

Level 5 (Acute and Specialist Community Mental Health Services)

Definition: specialist mental healthcare usually includes intensive team-based specialist assessment and intervention (typically state/territory mental health services) with involvement from a range of different types of mental health professionals, including case managers, psychiatrists, social workers, occupational therapists, psychologists and drug and alcohol workers. This level also often includes more intensive care provided by GPs.

Care environment: typically, community locations with outreach to the person within their home or other environment. This level may also involve specialist mental health inpatient care within a hospital environment, community based intermediate care, sub-acute unit, or crisis respite centre.

Core clinical services:

For this level of care, the person is likely to benefit from psychiatric assessment and care, crisis management, and therapeutic interventions using assertive engagement strategies provided by a multi-disciplinary specialist team with outreach capability. Care should be provided in close collaboration with General Practice.

Support services: additional services are likely to be needed and may include:

- psycho-social disability support services (including peer support, daily living support, social skills training, and social participation support).
- community supports (including peer support and social participation support).
- assistance to access support and advice relating to known environmental stressors.
- lifestyle interventions (e.g., nutrition, sleep, exercise, meaningful social connections).

Referral criteria:

A person requiring this level of care usually has significant symptoms (e.g., hallucinations, avoidant behaviour, paranoia, disordered thinking, delusions) and problems in functioning independently across multiple or most everyday roles (work, education, parenting, volunteering) and/or is experiencing:

- Significant risk of suicide, self-harm, self-neglect, or vulnerability.
- Significant risk of harm to others.
- A high level of distress with potential for debilitating consequence.

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The Australia Government, National PHN Guidance Initial Assessment and Referral for Mental Healthcare – version 1.05, 2019 (updated 2023)

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