

Preparing for my first visit to a Mental Health and Wellbeing Local



INTRODUCTION

Mental Health and Wellbeing Locals (MHWL) are a free service for Victorians aged 26 and over.

If you would like to read more about how a MHWL can help you, visit the [Amaze website](#).

To find out where MHWLs are located, [click here](#). The list will be updated as new MHWLs open. You can find which MHWL is closest to where you live.

Once you've done this, you can contact them by the following ways:



Phone



Visiting the service in-person (no appointment needed)



MHWLs can come to see you at home, in some cases. This will need to be prearranged. Contact your MHWL via phone or in-person to discuss this.

Some MHWL locations have designated times for walk-ins.

Check the website first, before going.

If you feel comfortable, you can call the MHWL to check.

In the first section, there is some information to help you decide if you need a support person to help you, or not. There is a checklist to help you plan how to contact a MHWL.

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DO I NEED A SUPPORT PERSON?

What is a support person?

A support person is a person you trust who can help you to visit the MHWL. This person can help you with some or all of the steps in planning and visiting the MHWL. Sometimes a support person may be a formal person, for example, an advocate or a support worker. Sometimes they can be a trusted family member, partner or friend.

Do I have a support person?

Some Autistic people will have a support person that helps them with tasks they need support with. This may be a family member, partner, trusted friend or formal person. Sometimes when you're unwell, a friend or family member may offer to help. Or you may ask a friend or family member to be your support person. You may need to ask more than one person before you find someone free to help you.

Can I choose whether I have a support person?

Yes, you can choose whether to have a support person. There may be times in your life when you have someone supporting you, and other times when you can manage on your own.

Times when a support person may be helpful

- When you are unwell and need physical help.
- If you feel overwhelmed or have had a shut down.
- To get to an appointment on time, if that's something you find hard.
- If you need someone to write down notes and to help you remember things.
- If you need help after your appointment with the things you need to do.
- If you want some emotional support before, during, and after the appointment.

Times when a support person may not be helpful

- When you want to discuss private information with the mental health worker that you don't want to share in front of another person.
- If a support person is pressuring you to take them when you visit the MHWL or is not being supportive in other ways.
- If the support person is making the situation more stressful for you.

If you want to talk about private information with the mental health worker, you may want to choose a support person who you normally wouldn't take with you. You can also ask your support person to support you for part of the appointment rather than the whole appointment.

PLANNING HOW TO CONTACT A MHWL

This is a checklist of the steps needed to contact a MHWL.

On the checklist, tick the column/s next to each step to show:

- What you can do (Me column)
- Where you need a support person
- Or where a step isn't required (Not needed column).

You can add your own steps to the list.

Things to think about before contacting the MHWL	ME	SUPPORT PERSON	NOT NEEDED
Appointment or drop-in			
Check drop-in times, or whether you need to make an appointment.			
Get your diary or calendar.			
If booking over the phone, call the MHWL			
Compare available times to your diary/ calendar.			
Visiting the MHWL in-person:			
Choose the best way to get to your MHWL. You want to allow time for any possible delays such as from bad traffic or weather conditions that may affect your travel. Using Google Maps can help you determine the best option for the day and the best time to leave. _____ _____ _____ _____ _____			

Things to think about before contacting the MHWL	ME	SUPPORT PERSON	NOT NEEDED
<p>Think about the best way to get home after the appointment and if you need support. You may choose to use a different mode of transport.</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>			
<p>If you're taking a support person, decide whether they'll travel with you or meet you at the clinic.</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>			
<p>If you are driving, where will you park? Some clinics have a carpark, some may have street parking or overflow parking at busy times. Check if you need to pay for parking.</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>			
<p>To make it easier to find, check Google Street view to see what the clinic looks like from the outside.</p>			
Things I may need to bring to the local:			
<p>Bring your sensory tools, this may be your fidgets, ear defenders, sunglasses/hats or other item that will help you regulate.</p>			
<p>If you have written or typed notes, bring them along.</p>			

Things to think about before contacting the MHWL	ME	SUPPORT PERSON	NOT NEEDED
Make sure your phone is charged before you leave.			
Names and contact details for any medical professionals you currently see such as your GP or other allied health professionals.			
If you are an NDIS participant, please bring your plan. MHWL can assist you, but only with services that are not included in your NDIS plan.			
<i>You can add your own steps here.</i>			
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HOW I COMMUNICATE

This checklist helps you choose how to communicate at the MHWL and prepare for your visit. It also includes your physical and sensory needs that may affect your experience

Will you communicate verbally during your visit?

Yes

No

Some of the time

With support _____

Other _____

Do you want to use any of these type of communication supports when communicating with mental health workers?

Typing

Communication App _____

Pen and Paper

Auslan/Key Word Sign

Do you need an interpreter? Yes No

Other _____

No

Which activities do you need more time for:

Reading

Thinking

Making a choice

Remembering

Other _____

None of these

Do you have any sensory access needs?

This can include smells, like coffee, seating preferences, movement breaks, lighting, and sounds.

Do you have physical access needs?

If you need support with thinking, remembering and making choices, the next section has some questions to answer to help you to prepare.

The worksheet has space for you to make notes before your appointment to help you to remember and communicate clearly with the mental health professional.

WHAT I WANT TO SAY

On arrival at a MHWL, you will be asked by a mental health worker 'How can I help you?' or 'What has brought you here today?'

Before your first visit, it is a good idea to think about how you will answer the question. You can write this down below.

I am here to get help with:

1

2

3

If you find this question tricky or difficult to answer, the next section is a worksheet with questions to help you work through your thoughts.

**If you need urgent help,
or your life is in danger dial 000.**

**For 24/7 crisis support
call Lifeline on 13 11 14.**

WORKSHEETS

Writing down your symptoms or issues will help you when speaking to a staff member at the MHWL. You can decide what information you want to share and what you don't want to share. There is also the option to remain anonymous.

You may be asked questions about your **current** and **past** symptoms. This worksheet will help you reflect on your mental health experiences.

You don't have to answer all these questions. It's rather a way to organise your thoughts and think about what you would like to discuss at MHWL.



Changes

You may be asked if any **big changes** have happened in your life recently. This means things that are big or important to you. For example, someone close to you becoming sick or dying, moving to a new house, your pet getting sick or losing your job. There may be other changes that are big or important to you. Write down the changes below.



Mental Health

What are your **current** mental health symptoms?

If you don't know, have you noticed any changes in your mood or have other people commented on your mood, do you have trouble sleeping, or difficulty focusing?

Have you been **diagnosed** with a mental health condition in the past? Write down any of the details you remember about the diagnosis and when it was.

What mental health services, treatments and supports have you used in the **past (if any)**?



Health

Have you been unwell or sick recently?

This could be an illness, or an injury.

Have you been **diagnosed** with a chronic health condition? If yes, write down any details that you remember about the diagnosis and when it was. List any medications you take for this condition/s.

A chronic health condition typically lasts longer than 12 months and needs ongoing management. Examples include arthritis, asthma, diabetes and endometriosis.

What health services, treatments and supports have you used in the **past**?

This includes doctors, or allied health professionals you may see such as a psychologist, or physiotherapist. List any types of treatments, like medications or therapies that worked in the past. This could include lifestyle support, such as exercise and diet.



Lifestyle




Have you noticed or someone close to you noticed any changes in your **diet**?

Have you noticed or someone close to you noticed any changes in your **sleep**?

Have you noticed or someone close to you noticed any changes in your consumption of **alcohol and/or other drugs**?

This could include using medications for their non-prescribed use or non-medical use.

This checklist is designed to help you reflect on various aspects of your life. It serves as a prompt for you to consider potential changes - both **positive** and **negative**. Space is provided for your notes, which will assist you in organising your thoughts for your visit to the MHWL.

	Positive Change	No Change	Negative Change	Comments
 Family				
 Friends				
 Partner/s				
 Housing				
 Work				
 Study				

	Positive Change	No Change	Negative Change	Comments
 Hobbies				
 Exercise				
 Self-care				
 Stimming				
 Sensory Sensitivity				
 Sensory Seeking				
 Fatigue or sleep				

	Positive Change	No Change	Negative Change	Comments
<i>You can add your own here</i>				

RESOURCES

If you need urgent help or your life is in danger dial 000.

Crisis Support

Lifeline

National free crisis counselling service.
Available 24 hours a day.

13 11 14

Beyond Blue

National free brief mental health counselling service.
Available 24 hours a day.

1300 224 636

Suicide Call Back Service

A free nationwide service providing 24/7 phone and online counselling to people affected by suicide.

1300 659 467

1800 RESPECT

National free family, domestic and sexual violence counselling service.
Available 24 hours a day.

1800 737 732

13YARN

National free crisis counselling support service for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.
Available 24 hours a day.

13 92 76

Parentline (Victoria only)

A phone counselling service for parents and carers for children from birth to 18 years old in Victoria.
Available 8am to midnight, 7 days a week including public holidays.

13 22 89

Autism Connect is a free, national Autism helpline, providing independent and expert information over phone, email and webchat. For more information about Autism, or to talk about your situation, contact our Autism Connect Advisors via:

Phone: 1300 308 699

Email: info@autismconnect.org.au

Website and webchat: www.amaze.org.au/autismconnect

Available from 8am to 7pm, Monday to Friday (excluding public holidays).

Amaze Inc.

678 Victoria Street,
Richmond VIC 3121

Phone: 03 9657 1600

Email: info@amaze.org.au

www.amaze.org.au

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