

Accessing a Mental Health and Wellbeing Local in Victoria

This resource provides information about Mental Health and Wellbeing Locals (MHWLs). It explains how MHWLs can support Autistic people experiencing mental health concerns. It also explains how you can contact an MHWL service.

What is a MHWL?

MHWLs are a service for adults aged 26 years and older. They can provide mental health and well-being supports tailored to your individual needs. They can also provide you with treatment and care if you are experiencing mental health and/or substance use concerns. They operate in locations across Victoria.

This service is also available to families, carers and friends supporting someone with mental health concerns. MHWLs can support you in your caring role and with your own mental health needs.

MHWLs have been created with and for the local communities they serve. They can help you connect with supports and services based in your local area. They are designed to be within easy reach, whether that's by phone, walk-in, or home visit.

What kind of supports do MHWLs provide?

When you access a MHWL, they will conduct an initial assessment of your needs. They will then create a care plan with you. They will be guided by you throughout this process.

MHWLs can provide a range of short, medium and long-term (up to 12 months in duration) services, including:

- **One-on-one support** with a mental health worker.
- **Assistance with practical life skills**, e.g., connecting with community groups or activities. This might include helping you to access other community and social services as needed (e.g., financial, employment and/or housing services).
- **Education, self-help and peer support** groups that create opportunities for learning, sharing experiences and social connection.

MHWLs can also coordinate your care and work alongside GPs, private therapists, specialist services, and other healthcare professionals who may be supporting you.

It is important to note that MHWLs do not provide autism assessment and diagnosis services. They are also not a crisis service.

If you receive NDIS funded supports, MHWLs can't provide you with the same type of support. They can support you with other services that are different from your NDIS plan.

How MHWLs can assist the Autistic community

- Assess your mental health needs and work with you to identify next steps.
- Connect Autistic people and/or their parent/carer's to peer support groups.
- If you are a parent/carer, family member or friend, MHWLs can provide you with support.
- You can speak to a peer worker who has lived experience of mental health concerns.
- Help you with other mental health services, including referral to specialists.
- Help you find local community groups and social activities to join.
- Support you in self-advocating if you are experiencing barriers to accessing other services and supports.
- Assist you with independent living tasks, such as booking appointments, budgeting, driving and shopping.
- Help you with navigating the NDIS and other government services.
- Provide you with free drop-in access to the internet and computers where needed.
- There are private rooms if you need a private place to regulate.
- You can drop in for a tea or coffee and familiarise yourself with the space.

The supports and services provided by different MHWLs can vary. Contact your local MHWL for more information about what they can offer.

How do I access a MHWL?

Eligibility requirements:

✔ You DO need

- To be 26 years of age and older.
- To be a resident of the local area, in some cases. This is to ensure you receive supports available close to where you live.

✘ You DON'T need

- A referral.
- A Medicare card.
- To pay for MHWL services. There is no cost to accessing an MHWL and their services are free of charge.

To find out where MHWLs are located, [click here](#). The list will be updated as new MHWLs open. Identify which MHWL is local to you or the closest to where you live. Once you've done this, you can contact the MHWL 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

See the list above for information on MHWL phone numbers and addresses. Opening hours vary across different MHWLs. Visit the relevant MHWL website for more information. A list of MHWL websites is available [here](#).

Carers, families and friends are welcome to contact a MHWL on someone else's behalf. In this situation, ensure that you have received the person's consent to do so.

Contact Autism Connect for assistance:

Our Autism Connect Advisors can provide general advice and information to help you prepare for a visit to a MHWL.

Phone: 1300 308 699

Email: info@autismconnect.org.au

Website and webchat:

www.amaze.org.au/autismconnect/