

Queensland Health Victim Support Service

Referral Guidelines



Who we are:

Queensland Health Victim Support Service (QHVSS)

- state-wide service hosted by Metro North HHS
- provides free, confidential services to victims of crime, when the person who committed the act of violence is diverted to the forensic mental health system
- staffed by experienced social workers and psychologists
- recognises that early support for people who are victims of violent crimes (and their families) helps them to more effectively cope with the offence and improves their long term wellbeing
- has offices in Brisbane, Townsville and Cairns and outreach throughout Queensland

Services are provided to a broad range of victims, including health consumers, Qld Health staff and other professionals.

Who do we support:

QHVSS can assist when

A person is a victim of an act of personal violence or is a family member of a direct victim

AND

The person who committed the act of violence

- has, or may have, a mental illness or intellectual disability *AND*
- has been, or may be eligible to be, diverted to the Queensland Forensic Mental Health or Forensic Disability System

Common referrals managed by QHVSS include:

1. Victims eligible for entitlements under the *Mental Health Act 2016*

where the patient's status is

- Forensic Order / Treatment Support Order
- Classified
- Mental Health Court reference- current or likely

and the victim is:

- direct victim
- family member of a direct victim
- parent/ guardian of a child or a person with impaired capacity
- other person impacted by the violence eg patient's family

2. Victims where the offender has or is likely to receive a mental health defence in the Magistrates Court.

The *Mental Health Act 2016* facilitates information sharing for referrals to QHVSS

Where possible, clinicians should seek consent from the victim, to allow QHVSS to initiate contact.

When the victim is not known:

s781 of the *Mental Health Act 2016* allows Qld Health employees to use or disclose personal information to assist in the identification of a victim and offer support services to the person.

Clinicians can advise QHVSS of a forensic patient name and the date and nature of charges. This information allows QHVSS to liaise with QPS to attempt to locate the victim and offer them support.

What we do:

QHVSS provides a trauma informed, inclusive service to victims and their families. Services available to clients include:

- face to face, telephone and email services to victims and consultations with service providers
- evidence based counselling and clinical interventions
- advice on safety planning
- education and information regarding the Queensland forensic mental health system
- court support for matters dealt with at the Mental Health Court
- assistance with preparing victim impact statements
- specific information provision related to the victim provisions of the *Mental Health Act 2016*
- assistance with referrals and access to other specialist services

Assistance using interpreters is available.

How to refer:

- via phone or email- QHVSS does not require a referral form
- where practical please discuss the referral with the victim before contacting us
- referrals can be made by self, family, mental health services, other health services or any other service provider
- all referrals are discussed at the weekly QHVSS intake meeting (or sooner for more urgent cases)
- if you are unsure about suitability for referral we are happy to discuss the case

Contact us:

QHVSS is available during business hours (Monday to Friday 8.30am- 4.30pm):

- **QHVSS state-wide** 1800 208 005
- **Townsville office** 0429 621 764
- **Cairns office** 0437 149 925
- **Email:** victim.support@health.qld.gov.au **Website:** www.health.qld.gov.au/qhvss

