

Disability  
Services

# Client Handbook



VMICH



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# Welcome.

Welcome to VMCH.

We recognise that every person is unique and we are committed to offering you flexible and individualised choices to meet your needs.

We will support you at all times throughout your journey under the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) while continuing to provide you with comprehensive, high quality supports and services.

This handbook provides an overview of our guidelines and we hope this information helps you get the most out of our services. VMCH has experienced and qualified staff who are committed to help you to achieve your goals and we look forward to sharing this journey with you.



**Sonya Smart**  
Chief Executive Officer  
VMCH

Here at VMCH, our services are as diverse as the people we support.

Our values underpin the work we do. As a Catholic for-purpose organisation, love, joy, hospitality and courage aren't just words to us, they guide us in everything we do.

While we've been around for over a century, we're always moving forward. By staying true to who we are in supporting people and families to live their best lives; providing a place to call home and spaces to learn and grow.

Our professional and compassionate teams are with you on your life journey; helping you with a wide range of support from specialist education, disability services, affordable homes, retirement living and at-home aged care.



# Our services for people 18 and over.

We offer supports for people to reach their goals and aspirations, delivered at centres across Melbourne and regional Victoria, in their home or in the community.

- One-on-one support in the home which can be tailored to individual needs for personal care or community access
- Group based social activities and transition from school programs
- Short-term accommodation (overnight respite)
- Weekends, short breaks and holiday programs
- Supported Independent Living
- Specialist Disability Accommodation
- Purpose-built home for young people with an Acquired Brain Injury (ABI).

## Speciality Services

- NDIS Support Coordination
- Behaviour management support
- Allied Health Services, including Speech Pathology, Occupational Therapy, Physiotherapy and Psychology.

# About our services.

## Advocacy

An advocate is someone you can trust to stand beside you, speak on your behalf and to protect and promote your rights.

We also promote self-advocacy to empower you to make independent decisions. However there may be circumstances where a person needs to access to an independent formal advocacy service.

Please see our important contacts list for other information and support services, pages 19 and 20.

## Animals in your home

We ask that animals in your home are restrained during the time our staff are providing support services. Pets may be approved in residential accommodation services if all residents are in agreement and the assessment criteria are met.

## Behaviours of concern or restrictive interventions

Where Behaviours of Concern are identified which may result in harm or prevents a person achieving their goals, a plan developed by a suitably qualified practitioner that meets current practice standards must be provided before bookings for services can be accepted. The behaviour support plan must be updated every year and provided to VMCH so that strategies including those involving the use of restrictive practices can be implemented.

This includes the administration of medication related to behaviour support. Positive Behaviour Support strategies are used to minimise harm, create opportunities to learn new skills and manage the behaviour with the least restrictive options. All Behaviour Support Plans involving restrictive interventions are reported to the NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission. If there is no funding for Behaviour Supports in your NDIS plan please advise VMCH who can assist you to obtain a review of the plan.



## Chemical safety

We don't provide cleaning products in some circumstances. All chemical products and substances should be retained in the original packaging. Staff cannot use unlabelled or decanted chemical products, nor mix any products together.

Products labelled as hazardous or dangerous are not to be used (including most products containing bleach, ammonia, methylated spirits and caustic oven cleaners).

Hazards are assessed on an individual basis to ensure safety of staff and the people we support. Chemicals for hygiene and cleaning/laundry are only used in accordance with manufacturers' instructions.

## Child Safe Standards

VMCH is committed to the safety and wellbeing of all children and young people; as a community we support and respect all children, as well as our staff and volunteers. VMCH is committed to preventing child abuse and identifying risks early, removing and reducing these risks. Our child safe policy (available at [vmch.com.au](http://vmch.com.au)) is aligned to the Child Safe Standards and implemented across our organisation to protect children from harm.

- We have a zero tolerance of child abuse. We are committed to providing a child safe environment where children and young people are safe and feel safe, and their voices are heard about decisions that affect their lives.
- We are committed to open communication with our families and support them to promote the wellbeing and safety of their children.
- We have robust human resources and recruitment practices for all staff and volunteers. Our organisation is committed to regularly training and educating our staff and volunteers on child abuse risks.
- We are committed to providing a safe environment for children with disability, as well as the cultural safety of Aboriginal children and children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds.

## Choice and control

We are committed to ensuring that any potential conflicts of interest are identified and managed in a manner that ensures you retain choice and control over how you use your National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) funding. This includes the right to choose a service provider that is not VMCH. We have policies and procedures in place to manage conflicts of interest, and we will support you to understand the range of choices of providers of supports.

## Comments, complaints and suggestions

Our services are regularly reviewed and we welcome and value all feedback. To provide feedback or make a complaint you can use a Have Your Say form, write a letter, send an email, or simply talk to a manager or staff member.

Our staff are responsible for recording feedback, complaints or grievances in our data base which is reviewed and responded to by senior staff.

If you are not satisfied with the process or outcome – or at any time you choose – you can refer the matter to the General Manager Disability Services or VMCH CEO on 1800 036 377 or The Victorian Disability Services Commissioner on 1800 677 342. Please see our important contacts list for other information and support services, pages 19 and 20.

## Culture and diversity

We recognise and respect diversity of people in all forms including ethnic, sociocultural, religion, disability, gender and sexuality. Services are delivered in a sensitive and respectful manner that consider the aspects of your identity and preferences that you share with us.

## Emergency medical care and non-emergency medical care

We have procedures in place for circumstances where the health of a person is deteriorating. If a person becomes unwell at a day activity or respite, they or their nominated contact person will be consulted and may need to go home. If you're assessed as unwell prior to starting the service, we reserve the right to not provide the service.

Staff are trained in first aid but do not have clinical-care qualifications. In a situation that is considered an emergency, an ambulance will be called and representatives notified.

Wherever possible our staff will attend hospital to provide support – particularly during the initial transfer period. This may result in additional charges as outlined in your service agreement.

## Equipment maintenance and repair

To ensure the safety and well-being of all people at our sites our equipment is maintained in accordance with a routine maintenance schedule.

Hazard reports and maintenance requests are logged online whenever an unexpected problem occurs. Maintenance requests are responded to in accordance with a risk hierarchy.

If you use personal equipment such as mobility aids and communication devices, we ask that you keep it in a clean and safe condition so our staff can provide necessary supports. We will let you know if there are problems with equipment during support services.

## Funding, fees and accounts

### Funding

Where funding arrangements from third parties are in place, including the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS), Transport Accident Commission (TAC), Worksafe, private insurer or other organisation, we will request payment for supports and services delivered to customers. Current fees and terms are set out in your service agreement.

Where these funding schemes are unable to fund additional costs, we will request payment directly from you. Examples of these costs include movie tickets, entrance to an event, meals during an outing, or fees for activities run at our service centres.

### Payment of fees

Bpay and direct debit are our preferred payment option but not compulsory. Please complete the Direct Debit Request Service Agreement and Form, which is available through your VMCH contact person or team leader.

### Spending money

We know that it's your right to manage and have access to money. At times, our staff are required to manage funds on behalf of some of the people we support. We have arrangements in place to help you manage spending money and account for how it is spent. Further information is available from your VMCH contact person or team leader.

## Hardship policy

If you're experiencing financial hardship, we'll assess the case for a reduction of the fees for a set period of time.

All applications must be approved by the Disability Services General Manager and VMCH Chief Financial Officer. This application should be accompanied with supporting documentation, such as Centrelink statements or a Statutory Declaration.

## Managing your funds

If your plan is NDIA managed we will deal with the NDIA to receive payments for services. If your plan is managed by a Plan Manager, you must provide details your Plan Manger organisation so we can to invoice them. If can request a copy of the receipt. If you are self-managing your plan then you or your family will be invoiced directly.

## Debt management

We require payment for services to be made within 14 days of the original invoice (request for payment). We have fees and debtor management procedures in place to resolve debt recovery. The procedures outline our roles and responsibilities, and that of clients, plan managers and other parties.

## Gifts and benefits

Although we appreciate the offer, employees, volunteers, students on placement and contractors should not seek or encourage gifts or benefits in relation to their professional duties. Receiving of gifts may be seen by others as an inducement, thus creating a potential conflict of interest. This is addressed in our Code of Conduct.

However, choosing to donate to VMCH creates great opportunities for the people we support. Your generosity will make a real difference to the lives of older people, children and adults with a disability, their families and carers. If you would like to make a donation or gift please get in touch with us.

## Infection control

If you have symptoms or have been exposed to a potentially infectious illness phase do not attend onsite services or receive home or community based services. This includes staff, visitors and clients.

Please notify the service to cancel or postpone community appointments if you are unwell with symptoms of infectious condition. If you have symptoms of influenza or gastroenteritis you will be sent home from respite or day services and staff may decline to take people into the community to prevent spread of illness.

Please access the Public Health and Wellbeing Regulation 2009 (regulation 85) to view the list of conditions that are exclusions for infectious diseases. [www2.health.vic.gov.au/public-health/infectious-diseases/school-exclusion/school-exclusion-table](http://www2.health.vic.gov.au/public-health/infectious-diseases/school-exclusion/school-exclusion-table).

Handwashing is one of the most effective ways of controlling the spread of contagious conditions, so we encourage regular use of handwashing facilities or hand sanitiser on arrival and when leaving services.

## Labelling and care of clothes, equipment and belongings

We ask that you please label your personal belongings (including clothes, bags, containers, mobility equipment and communication devices) with a permanent marker or secure waterproof labels when you're accessing centre-based programs.

This will enable us to identify and return items to the correct person. To prevent loss or damage our staff will not normally wash personal clothing of participants in respite or day programs.

For respite care, please provide sufficient clothing along with a list of all items included so that staff can return everything at the end of the respite period.

## Manual handling

All staff are trained in safe manual handling techniques within the scope of their role and VMCH direct care staff are trained in use of mobility aids.

But we're unable to lift people without using mobility equipment such as lifters and hoists as this is considered unsafe for both the people we support and staff. If a person is assessed by VMCH or a recognised health professional as needing two people to assist for mobility transfers then this requires two suitably trained staff to be able to proceed.

## Medication

Our staff will support you to take medication prescribed by a doctor or over the counter medication that has been authorised by a doctor or pharmacist.

Medication must be in a dose administration aid unless it cannot be re-packaged, when it must be in the original labelled container.

All medication must be accompanied by a current approved authorisation form, otherwise staff are unable to assist in administering it.

If you wish to self-manage your medication, you must be assessed and approved to do this by a medical practitioner. A medical authorisation form will be given to you to complete with your service agreement.

## Privacy and collection of information

We are bound by legislation including: The Privacy Act 1988 and Australian Privacy Principles (The Act), The Health Records Act 2001 (Vic) and Health Privacy Principles, The Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014 (Vic) and the Information Privacy Principles.

A copy of our Privacy Policy and Privacy Collection Statement is available on our website or from staff on request.

We only use the information you provide for the reasons it was collected and in accordance with The Act. We may disclose your information to other parties to whom we are authorised or required by law to disclose information.

We will not give someone else your information without your consent and will only share within VMCH where you would expect this to normally occur such as for the management, funding, monitoring and delivery of supports.

Representatives of external regulatory bodies and/or statutory authorities may access your information in the process of auditing or investigating VMCH regulatory compliance. We will allow you to access and correct personal information we hold about you as required by law. If you have any queries or would like to request access to that information, please contact us in writing via the VMCH.

Privacy Officer, PO Box 134 East Melbourne 8002.

### **Professional boundaries**

Clients and staff are asked to respect professional and personal boundaries that may breach code of conduct or be perceived as a conflict of interest. This includes the following expectations:

- Staff are not permitted to visit, meet or work for clients outside their rostered shift allocation
- Staff are not to use your debit or credit card
- Staff are not permitted to witness your personal documents
- No exchanging of personal contact details between staff and you, your family member/carer
- No swearing or conversation which may be considered offensive or sexually suggestive.

### **Replace/repair of damaged items (such as phones, iPads and laptops)**

We'll do what we can to try and keep your things safe and secure. But we're not responsible for accidental loss or damage of items brought into or transported during our services.

Understandably, if you damage the property of VMCH or other clients you'll be responsible for full cost of repair or replacement or payment of the excess where an insurance claim is made. We recommend that you keep valuable items that are not necessary for daily use at home.

## Respect and interaction

The **VMCH Code of Respect and Interaction** protects the rights of all persons. This includes staff, clients and their families/representatives and volunteers. It outlines the responsibilities of the people involved with VMCH to ensure that their conduct and interactions are respectful.

If you'd like, a copy of the Code is available on request.

Our employees, volunteers, students on placement and contractors are also bound by a Code of Conduct, which outlines VMCH's minimum standards and obligations in relation to their workplace.

## Rights and responsibilities

A summary of rights and responsibilities for VMCH and our clients is outlined in your service agreement. Your rights are underpinned by the Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 which sets out in law the basic rights, freedoms and responsibilities of people in Victoria. The Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commissioner (T: 1300 292 153) and the Victorian Disability Services Commissioner (T: 1800 677 342) both provide information on rights and responsibilities for service users and service providers. For more contacts see our important contacts list on pages 19 and 20.

## Risk assessment

We operate within a Risk Management Framework. We also recognise and value the principle of Dignity of Risk, by providing people with opportunities to try new things, to test their limits, and develop their skills and capacities. If your choices have potential to harm yourself and/or impose harm on others, then an assessment will be done and measures to reduce risk may be negotiated. We may also refuse to provide supports if the risks cannot be adequately managed.



## Safeguarding people

We have a framework to prevent, identify and respond to abuse or neglect. This includes a Safeguarding Individuals Policy, and a number of procedures which support this.

Every person within our service has the right to feel safe and be respected at all times, and VMCH has formalised a Zero Tolerance approach to any abuse of Human Rights. More detailed information is available on request.

## Safety and emergencies: fire, natural disasters

All our sites have fire and smoke protection equipment which is connected back to the Emergency Services base. During periods of high or extreme fire danger our services may be modified (e.g. change of community venue or re-scheduled outings).

To reduce the risk of harm during a catastrophic fire risk period VMCH may cancel services or send you home.

Emergency evacuation plans are in place for natural disasters. VMCH trains staff in emergency evacuation and regularly conducts evacuation drills.

## Shift cancellations and appointment changes

If you tell us that you want to change or cancel an appointment for VMCH Supports, then we will negotiate a new appointment time with you. There may be fees or charges for cancelled or changed services, and details can be found in your service agreement.

## Smoking

Like most places, we have a no smoking policy within all buildings and vehicles. We ask that you don't smoke when VMCH representatives are present, including community appointments away from home or at a service outlet.

# Pastoral Care.

Embracing diversity means that our pastoral care service offers spiritual and emotional support to individuals of all cultures, faiths and nationalities / who access our services and their families.

Our Pastoral Care Workers can offer support during triumphs and joys, as well as times of pain, loss and anxiety.

Please talk to your VMCH contact person or team leader to connect to a pastoral care worker.



## Contact us

For further information about our Disability Services please call 1300 698 624.

And if you have questions or concerns about your service please call your VMCH contact person or team leader as outlined on your service agreement.

We're also happy to provide you with more information about any of our other VMCH services, so please contact us:

1300 698 624

[vmch.com.au](http://vmch.com.au)

[hello@vmch.com.au](mailto:hello@vmch.com.au)

486 Albert Street, East  
Melbourne VIC 3002



# Important contacts.

## Disability Services Commissioner

The Disability Services Commissioner (DSC) works with people with a disability to resolve complaints about disability service providers. They work with disability service providers to improve outcomes for people with a disability.

Level 20, 570 Bourke St, Melbourne Vic 3000

**t:** 1800 677 342

**tty:** 1300 726 563

**e:** [contact@odsc.vic.gov.au](mailto:contact@odsc.vic.gov.au)

## National relay service

The switchboard is open Monday to Friday from 9.00 am to 5.00 pm (Australian Eastern Time) except for public holidays in the Australian Capital Territory.

**t:** 1800 254 649

**t:** 02 6271 1000

(international +61 2 6271 1000)

**w:** [www.relayservice.gov.au](http://www.relayservice.gov.au)

**t:** 1800 677 342

## NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission

Level 4, 271 Spring Street

**t:** 1800 035 544

## Disability Resource Centre

The Disability Resource Centre (DRC) provides individual advocacy for adults with a disability free of charge throughout greater metropolitan Melbourne.

Ross House Association, 247–251 Flinders Lane, Melbourne

**t:** 03 9671 3000

**e:** [advocacy@drc.org.au](mailto:advocacy@drc.org.au)

## Office of the Public Advocate (OPA)

The Office of the Public Advocate (OPA) provides advocacy for people with a disability who have no other advocacy options and are at risk of abuse, exploitation or neglect, advocating for the best interests of clients under statutory guardianship.

Level 1, 204 Lygon St, Carlton Vic 3053

**t:** 1300 309 337

**tty:** 1300 305 612

## Valid Inc - The Victorian Advocacy League for Individuals with a Disability (VALID)

VALID is an advocacy group for adults with intellectual disabilities aged 0–18 years and their families.

34 Stanley Street, Collingwood Vic 3066, Australia

**t:** (03) 9416 4003,

**Rural** 1800 655 570

**e:** [intake@valid.org.au](mailto:intake@valid.org.au) (advocacy)

### General Enquires

**e:** [office@valid.org.au](mailto:office@valid.org.au)

## **Victorian Disability Worker Commission**

Level 20, 570 Bourke Street

Melbourne Vic 3000

**t:** 1800 497 132

## **The Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commissioner**

Level 3, 204 Lygon Street Carlton, Vic 3053

### **Office hours**

Monday to Friday 9am to 4.30pm

**t:** 1300 292 153

(weekdays from 9am to 4.30pm, closed between 12.30–1.30pm)

Reception phone

1300 891 848

(closed between 12.30–1.30pm)



# About VMCH

Here at VMCH, love, joy, hospitality and courage aren't just words to us. As a Catholic for-purpose organisation, these values underpin everything we do.

Our professional and compassionate teams are with you on your life journey; helping you with a wide range of support from early learning and therapy, specialist education, disability services, affordable homes, residential aged care, retirement living and at-home aged care.



1300 698 624

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