

NATIONAL CARER COUNSELLING PROGRAM

An Australian Government Initiative

Carer Counselling Program – Victoria

Information for Referrers

Background

The Department of Health and Ageing (DoHA) has provided funding for the implementation of a National Carers Counselling Program (NCCP) as part of its National Respite for Carers Program (NRCP). Carers Australia has been contracted by the Department to manage the implementation of the program nationally, and in Victoria the program is managed by Carers Victoria.

Objectives

The National Program Guidelines state the following objectives for the program:

- Provide short term counselling through professionally qualified counsellors;
- Target the provision of counselling services to the specific needs of carers;
- Ensure that all counselling services have an appropriate statement of rights and responsibilities specifying the role of the counsellor, as well as the legal and ethical responsibilities of the service;
- Facilitate the establishment of group counselling services for carers;
- Ensure that the counselling service is well integrated with all other forms of education and support services offered to carers.

Target Group

The client target groups for the NCCP are:

- Carers of frail older people (65+ and 50+ for indigenous)
- Carers of people with a disability or chronic illness, particularly those with complex needs
- Carers of people with dementia
- Carers of people receiving palliative care
- Carers of people with a mental illness

Carers do not need to be co-resident with the person they are caring for, and carers who have recently been bereaved or relinquished care are also eligible to access counselling in order to deal with any unresolved issues from their caring role.

Service Delivery Model

The service delivery model that is used for the Carer Counselling Program Victoria features:

- A centralised referral and intake process
- In-house and contracted provision of services
- Flexible delivery options including telephone and face-to-face counselling for individuals, couples and groups

Triggers for Referral

The focus of the Carer Counselling Program is on the particular needs of the individual carer in relation to the caring role. The program is not intended to address deep-seated problems requiring long-term therapy for resolution (eg. issues related to long-term trauma, abuse or relationship issues that existed prior to caring). Similarly, the NCCP is not intended as a therapy option for carers who themselves have been diagnosed with a mental illness. However, carers with a mental illness are not excluded from the program for issues related to caring.

The issues, directly relating to the caring role, that may trigger a referral to CCP-Vic may include:

- Acute carer stress
- Difficulty coping with caring role
- Transition issues such as recent assumption or relinquishment of caring, or relinquishment of employment as a result of the caring role
- Loss and grief including recent bereavement
- Relationship breakdown or family conflict as a direct result of the caring role

When is it appropriate to refer to CCP-Vic ?

The Carer Counselling Program seeks to complement the range of carer services that are currently provided by regional Carer Support Services and a range of other community-based agencies and health services.

The service provided by CCP-Vic consists of a formal, structured counselling program of up to six sessions at a time and is based on a counselling contract with the client that outlines the goals to be pursued in the course of each episode of counselling sessions.

How to Refer a Carer to CCP-Vic

Carers may self-refer directly by phoning the Carer Advisory Line on freecall number on 1800 242 636.

Referrals can also be made via the NCCP *Referral Form* that may be faxed or mailed to the Carer Counselling Program-Victoria. Copies of the referral form can be obtained by phoning the Carer Advisory Line on 1800 242 636 or downloaded from the website www.carersvictoria.org.au. Carers must provide their consent for the referral.

Carers referred to counselling will be contacted and assessed for eligibility by an Intake Counsellor and the referrer will be notified of the outcome of their referral by mail/email. At the conclusion of the counselling program, referrers will be notified by letter/email in order to facilitate any follow-up that may be indicated.