

FINDING HELP FOR SOMEONE WITH A MENTAL HEALTH PROBLEM: A resource for workers in the community care system

An initiative of Carers Victoria Respite Connections Mental Health Program

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This directory is an initiative of Carers Victoria Respite Connections Mental Health Program. It was compiled by Chris McGrath, in consultation with other local services and mental health program staff.

This resource is not a complete list of existing services and supports - there will doubtless be many gaps and some overlap in services listed.

However, it is intended to be a “user friendly” entry to what can be a complex system and it is hoped that by providing active links to relevant websites, the information offered will be kept current.

We also aim to update this resource regularly, and invite organisations who would like to have their information included or edited in the next version to contact chrism@carersvic.org.au

This directory was last updated October 2009.

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INTRODUCTION

Finding help for yourself or someone else who is experiencing distress from a mental illness, or who is in a mental health crisis, may be a challenge.

It can be difficult to know where to start, or how to find the organisation that offers the support and services you are seeking.

The mental health “system” is in fact, a configuration of many different services, comprising of public and private, government, hospital and community based components.

This guide will focus largely on public mental health organisations. It will provide information about a range of services offering different types of specialised support to families and individuals whose lives are affected by mental illness.

It will provide active links to the information sites of the major mental health services in Victoria.

It will also give information and links to organisations which offer a range of general health, personal and social supports. Although not mental health specific, these additional supports may be useful to someone living with a mental health problem.

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THE VICTORIAN MENTAL HEALTH SYSTEM

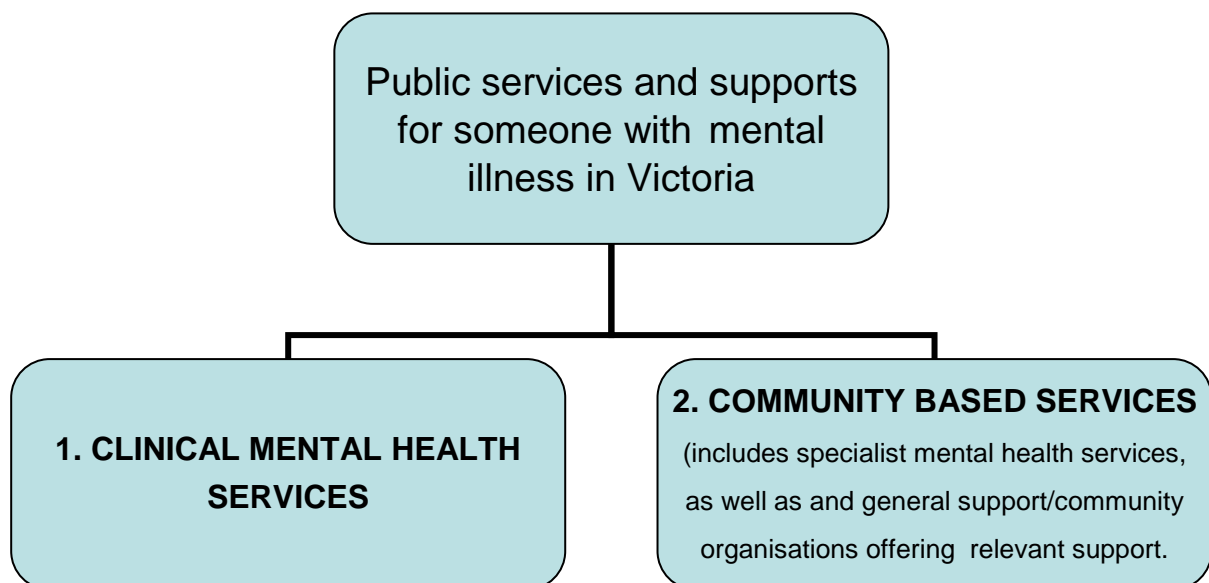
As noted, the Victorian Mental Health System is comprised of public and private, government and non-government, hospital and community elements.

Because this guide will focus primarily on the public mental health support system, it may be useful to think of the services provided by organisations within this system, as fitting into one of two major “streams”.

1. **Clinical mental health services**
2. **Community based services**

Each of these “streams”, or categories, has a slightly different focus, and may offer a different type of support.

What services are offered within these categories?



1. CLINICAL MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

These services provide direct and specific support for the **treatment and management of a person’s illness and its symptoms** – e.g. medication supervision, specific therapy and inpatient service (acute hospital or rehabilitations beds) when required. There are also a number of community programs managed within the clinical mental health system offering initial assessment, intervention and treatment as well as ongoing community case management, etc.

The clinical Mental Health System is divided into a number of geographical regions throughout Victoria – 13 metropolitan and 8 rural regions. Each regional service (called an **Area Mental Health Service**) offers a range of treatment options for people in that geographical area.

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It should be noted, that not everyone with a mental illness will receive treatment for their condition via the specialist clinical mental health system.

Many people are linked for their clinical mental health treatment (i.e. direct and specific support for the treatment and management of their illness and its symptoms) through GP's and/or through the private health system – some of these options will be outlined later.

2. COMMUNITY BASED ORGANISATIONS

These organisations provide a range of services to help people **manage the impact of a mental illness on their lives.**

This category includes community health and general support services which offer support that may be suitable to the needs of someone with a mental illness, as well as specialised mental health rehabilitation services.

Community Based Organisations are usually managed by non-government organisations, and offer different types of support – including social activities, peer support, housing support, outreach programs, respite and pre-employment training.

The specialised mental health services are known as **Psychiatric Disability and Rehabilitation Support Services (PDRSS).**

- **The types of support offered by these community organisations do vary from region to region; and the regions covered by the different services do not necessarily correspond with the boundaries of the clinical public mental health areas.**
- **This resource provides information and links to many community based organisations offering a range of general health, personal and social supports which may be useful to someone living with a mental health problem. As noted, some of these will be specialist mental health services, and others are general community or welfare agencies.**

Many people with mental illness find that they need some support in both areas i.e. treatment for the symptoms of their illness, as well as some support with managing the impact of living with a mental health condition – and so receive treatment from both service types.

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HELPFUL HINTS WHEN CONTACTING ANY SERVICE:

- Always ask whether the organisation you contact covers your region. Services often have strict funding boundaries and strict entry criteria, so it saves time at the outset to check whether you, or the person you are advocating for, is eligible for services from this organisation
- Keep a pen and paper handy to note the name of the person you spoke with, the service they are from, and any details of any further information they provide. Your first contact may just be the start of a paper trail before you find the service you need, and it is useful to be able to keep track of your progress.
- When requesting assistance or support from a service for a client, try and present your information client clearly.

One useful way of ensuring that you communicate your message clearly when contacting mental health services, is the **ABCD** approach:

A – ALERT. Report what has alerted or alarmed you. Describe what raised your concerns for this person.

B – BEHAVIOUR. Describe specifically what troubling behaviours you have noted – when, where, how often they are occurring etc.

C –CONVERSATION. Report exactly what the person is saying. Use quotes.

D – Details. Now is the time to report any other detail which may be relevant eg. known history including medication – past and present, family history, previous illnesses etc.

The Mental illness Fellowship has an excellent downloadable factsheet - “Collaborating with Health Professionals” with good information on getting the best from your contact with mental health services.

To download Mental Illness Fellowship factsheets: [Click here](#)

If the situation is an emergency, and the person you are caring for is in danger of harming themselves or someone else, you may need to call 000. Be very clear and give specific details of your situation and the risks involved (the ABCD approach described above may be useful), and request immediate assistance.

(Other useful crisis numbers are listed at the end of this resource)

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SECTION 1: CLINICAL MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

Adult Mental Health Services

Adult specialist mental health services are aimed primarily at people with serious mental illness or mental disorder who have associated significant levels of disturbance and psychosocial disability due to their illness or disorder. Commonly these will be people with a diagnosis of a major mental illness, such as schizophrenia or bipolar disorder, but will also include some people with other conditions such as severe personality disorder, severe anxiety disorder, or those who present in situational crisis that may lead to self-harm or inappropriate behaviour towards others.

Increasingly, adult mental health service consumers have more than one disorder, with drug and alcohol related disorders (dual diagnosis) being most prevalent.

Most area mental health services offer a number of different programs – including community based case management, mobile support, and Crisis and Assessment Teams (CATT) as well as a number of inpatient/hospital beds.

- **All of these services are accessed via a central ‘Psychiatric Triage’ number which offers 24 hour information, assessment and referral service in each region.**

The following link connects to the DHS information site which gives detail on the type of public adult mental health services available in each region of Victoria, and contact details. It also gives the Psychiatric Triage number in each region.

[Click here](#)

It is again worth noting that although it is a major part of Victoria’s specialist mental health system, many people receive direct and specific support for the treatment and management of their illness and its symptoms other than the clinical public mental health service.

If you are told that the person you are seeking assistance for is ineligible for treatment via your area mental health service, be sure to ask for information/advice on what other appropriate services exist in your region.

Family GP’s can be a good place to start- for general information or for a referral to an appropriate mental health specialist (now there are Medicare rebates available for some specialist mental health services via a GP referral.

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The following link connects to the **Australian GP Network** website to help locate an allied mental health professional registered with Medicare)

[Click here](#)

The following link connects to the **Beyond Blue** website **Directory of Medical and Allied Health Practitioners in Mental Health** and can assist with finding a mental health professional in your area.

These may be GP's, Psychologists, Social workers or Occupational Therapists who have a particular interest in mental health issues.

[Click here](#)

The following link connects to the Australian Psychological Society website - "Find a Psychologist" - which lists a range of psychologists who specialise in treating different mental health conditions. Information is also given on whether they are registered with Medicare rebate.

[Click here](#)

Aged Persons Specialist Mental Health Services

Aged persons mental health services are primarily for people with a long-standing mental illness who are now over 65 years of age, or who have developed functional illnesses such as depression and psychosis in later life.

They also provide services for people with psychiatric or severe behavioural difficulties associated with organic disorders such as dementia.

The following link connects to the DHS information site which gives detail on the types of public mental health services which provide specialist support and treatment to people over 65 in each region of Victoria, and contact details for these

[Click here](#)

Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (0-18 Years)

Specialist child and adolescent mental health services are provided for children and adolescents up to the age of 18 years with serious emotional disturbance. This includes young people with a diagnosable psychiatric disorder whose condition is considered seriously detrimental to their growth or development and/or where there are substantial difficulties in the person's social or family environment.

Young people from 16 to 18 years of age may receive a service from either child and adolescent mental health services or adult area mental health services depending on their needs.

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The following link connects to the DHS information site which details the types of public mental health services available for young people in each region.

[Click here](#)

State-wide Specialist Mental Health Services

In addition to the local area services, a number of specialist services are delivered on a state-wide basis. These services offer an additional level of expertise or service response for people with particular clinical conditions or high level needs.

These include services which specialise in specific conditions such as

- personality disorders
- eating disorders
- dual diagnoses (i.e. mental illness and substance use)
- family therapy

The following link will connect to the DHS website which describes the function and contact details for a number of public specialist mental health services which offer service on a state-wide basis.

[Click here](#)

Dual Diagnosis – mental illness and substance use

Dual Diagnosis refers to situation where a person experiences both mental illness and a substance use disorder. Mental illness and substance use often interact to make each diagnosis worse and to have adverse effects on many areas of functioning (including work, relationships, health, and safety).

Recovery from mental illness can be more challenging for people with a dual diagnosis, and treatment and support may be needed to address both issues.

The following link is to the DHS website which lists the range of alcohol and drug related services available in Victoria include community alcohol and drug services, forensic treatment, needle and syringe program, and support services

[Click here](#)

The Australian Drug Foundation:

The ADF represents a focused and integrated approach to drug use problems. It acts as an information service, and also has a community development, research and advocacy role.

[Click here](#)

Forensic Mental Health Service

Forensicare is the trading name for the Victorian Institute of Forensic Mental Health.

Forensicare provides inpatient and community services to mentally ill offenders in Victoria.

The following link will connect to the DHS website which lists the inpatient and community

supports to mentally ill offenders in Victoria.

<http://www.health.vic.gov.au/mentalhealth/services/forensic.htm>

There are a number of other community services which provide support to mentally ill offenders. These include:

Australian Community Support Organisation Specialist Mental Health Service

ACSO is a specialist state-wide program that provides direct support to people who are disadvantaged by the nature of their mental illness issues, and also by the nature of their contact with the criminal justice system. The program provides assistance with accommodation material aid, advocacy and on-going support.

www.acso.org.au

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SECTION 2: COMMUNITY BASED SERVICES

The non-government psychiatric disability rehabilitation and support services sector is a core component of **specialist mental health services** and complements the clinical mental health services.

PDRSS are managed by non-government organisations and **focus on addressing the impact of mental illness on a person's daily activities** and the social disadvantage resulting from illness.

They work within a recovery and empowerment model to maximise people's opportunities to live successfully in the community.

There are a range of PDRSS across the state providing different types of support programs including

- day programs
- housing support
- outreach
- peer support and self help
- planned respite.

The following is a link to the DHS information page which provides detail on the type of services offered by PDRSS across the state and their contact details.

[Click here:](#)

(Further details for a number of different PDRSS may also be listed in different sections of this resource relating to particular programs they may offer eg, family/carer support etc)

Youth Specific Services

The following link connects to the main **DHS information site** which details the types of public mental health services available for young people in each region, including some community based services. The “cut-off” ages between child and adolescent services (CAMS), youth services and adult services does differ between regions.

[Click here](#)

There are a number of other youth specific services that sit within the general health service sector. Many of the community organisations listed in the “General Community Support Organisations” of this resource also provide youth specific supports in some regions. Local councils frequently offer youth support services.

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headspace provides mental and health wellbeing support, information and services to young people and their families across Australia.

With 30 one-stop-shops, headspace has a range of youth-friendly health professionals who can help with

- General health
- Mental health and counselling
- Education, employment and other services
- Alcohol and other drug services.

www.headspace.org.au

There are a number of excellent **websites** which provide youth- friendly information on mental health and wellbeing. They offer links to appropriate services and very good downloadable factsheets etc.

These include:

www.ybblue.org.au

www.ruok2day.org.

www.reachout.org.au

youthcentral is the Victorian Government's web-based initiative for young people aged 12-25, with information and articles on youth health, wellbeing, community events and related issues.

www.youthcentral.vic.gov.au

Network of Mental Health Promotion Officers attached to Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services. MHPO's work within their Regions as well as at a statewide level, to facilitate and resource a systemic approach to promoting the mental health of young people. Activities include networking, consultation, education and training.

www.youthmentalhealth.org

Family and carer supports

There are a number of organisations which offer supports and services to assist families in managing the impact of mental illness on their lives.

These agencies offer services such as counselling, information and peer support to carers/families and to people with a mental illness. Other services may include phone support, education programs, support groups, referrals and advocacy, both on individual and systems levels.

Respite (taking a break from care responsibilities) is also often provided through these agencies or accessed via the Commonwealth Carer Respite Centre in each region.

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The following links are to organisations that provide support and services to families and carers of someone with a mental illness.

Carers Victoria:

Carers Victoria is the state-wide voice for family carers, representing and providing support to carers in Victoria – offering counselling, advice, advocacy, education and training.

Carer Advisory Line; Freecall 1800 242 636

www.carersvic.org.au

Carers Victoria Respite Connections

The Respite Connections mental health program provides support, advocacy, information and respite opportunities to carers in the western metropolitan region of Melbourne, who care for someone with a mental illness.

The mental health team can be contacted on 9396 9550, or directed via the Carers Advisory Line Freecall 1800 242 636. Additional information is also available via the Carers Victoria website.

This resource is an initiative of Respite Connections Mental Health Program.

Commonwealth Respite and Carelink Centres:

CRCC's provide free information about community aged care, disability and other supports, and can coordinate access to respite services for carers via their own regional carer service.

Freecall 1800 052 222

www.commcarelink.health.gov.au

Mental Illness Fellowship:

MIF offers a range of services and supports for people with mental illness and their families.

Great downloadable fact sheets.

Helpline: 03 8486 4222

www.mifellowship.org

ARAFEMI (Association of Relatives and Friends of the Mentally Ill)

ARAFEMI offers a range of supports to assist people with a mental illness to live in the community as well as support to families and carers.

www.arafemi.org.au

Mind:

MIND offers a range of programs including; residential rehabilitation, outreach services, transition to independent living, transition to stable and secure accommodation, respite for carers, volunteer and mentor programs, individual service packages and programs that foster healthy living, creative expression and participation in employment.

www.mindaustralia.org.au

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The Bouverie Centre

The Bouverie Centre provides specialist family sensitive and family therapy services to Victoria's Public Mental Health Services. Services include direct clinical services such as family sensitive work and family therapy, community services such as training and consultation, and academic services such as university accredited courses and continuing education workshops .

www.bouverie.org.au

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SECTION 3: ADDITIONAL RELEVANT COMMUNITY ORGANISATIONS AND SUPPORTS

Support agencies

The following agencies operate throughout Victoria and provide a range of services and supports to individuals and families. Like many of the organisations listed in Section 2, they do not specialise in mental health support, but many of the services they offer are appropriate for individuals and families impacted by mental illness. These may include counselling, groups, financial counselling, employment training and support, and youth services. Some services also offer material aid.

The types of services vary from region to region, and it is always important to check on whether the agency provides support in your region when seeking assistance for yourself, client or family member.

If you are told you or your client is ineligible due to regional funding boundaries, use the opportunity to ask which similar organisation does operate in your region.

Anglicare	www.anglicarevic.org.au
Aspire Foundation	www.aspire.org.au
Baptcare	www.baptcare.org.au
Brotherhood of St Lawrence	www.bsl.org.au
Centacare	www.centacaremelbourne.org
Community Connections	www.comconnect.com.au
Good Shepherd	www.goodshepvic.org.au
Hanover Welfare Services	www.hanover.org.au
Jesuit Social Services	www.jss.org.au
Lifeworks	www.lifeworks.com.au
Mackillop Family Services	www.mackillop.org.au
Melbourne City Mission	www.mcm.org.au
Salvation Army	www.salvationarmy.org.au
Wesley City Mission	www.wesley.org.au
Victorian Relief Food Bank	www.vrfb.com.au

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Community Health Directory

This category includes Community Health Services and other Community Health Program funded services in Victoria. Although not specialist mental health services, they offer a range of programs which may be relevant – including counselling, family support and youth services. These services include:

- **Stand-alone Community Health Services** – independently managed CHSs
- **Integrated Community Health Services (CHCs)** - which are part of larger health services or hospitals
- **Multipurpose Health Services** - rural services funded under the joint State and Commonwealth Multi Purpose Services (MPS) program which allows smaller communities to coordinate health services according to their needs
- **Women's Health Services** - funded via the Victoria Women's Health Program
- **Some statewide services** - specialist services which operate across Victoria including:
 - Victorian Foundation for the Survivors of Torture
 - International Diabetes Institute
 - Centre for Adolescent Health and Centre for Culture, Ethnicity and Health
- **Other types of services**

The following link connects to a directory of community health services:

[Click here](#)

Local Councils

Local councils also offer a range of services and supports to individuals and families. Although not mental health specific, they can be an important part of the support network for someone with a mental illness.

The following link connects to the Local Government Victoria website to help you locate the relevant local council website for information on services in your region.

[Click here](#)

Support for people from non-English speaking backgrounds

The Victorian Transcultural Psychiatric Unit is a state-wide unit which supports regional mental health and psychiatric disability support services in working with culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) consumers and carers throughout Victoria. Great downloadable mental health fact sheets in community languages.

www.vtput.org.au

Action on Disabilities in Ethnic Communities aims to assist people with disabilities from ethnic backgrounds, their carers and families to access services and ensure that service systems are inclusive and responsive to their needs.

www.adec.org.au

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The **Victorian Foundation for Survivors of Torture** (VFST), or '**Foundation House**' as it is also known, provides a range of services to people from refugee backgrounds whom have survived torture or war related trauma.

www.foundationhouse.org.au

The **New Hope Foundation** aims to assist newly arrived refugee and humanitarian entrants who are living in poverty across Victoria

www.newhope.asn.au

Many of the services listed in the “**General Community Support Organisations**” also provide specific services and supports for people from refugee or other CALD backgrounds in some regions.

Employment

There are many people with mental illnesses who would like to work, and who are not currently in employment. Meaningful employment is a major contributor to positive mental health outcomes.

A number of the PDRSS organisations listed above provide some pre-vocational training and support. **The Disability Employment Network** (DEN) provides specialist assistance to job seekers with disabilities who require on going support to find and maintain employment. DEN is delivered by a network of organisations – large and small – around Australia. The following link connects to the Australian Government Job Access website which provides support and information re employment opportunities for someone with a psychiatric disability. <http://www.jobaccess.gov.au/joac/home>

Centrelink

The following link connects to the Centrelink website for information on financial supports etc.

www.centrelink.gov.au

Resources, advocacy, self-help, peer-support

SANE - national charity working for a better life for people affected by mental illness through campaigning, education and research

www.sane.org.au

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beyondblue:

Beyondblue is part of the national depression initiative - aims to provide clear and comprehensive information about depression. It also has a list of GP's who have a special interest in working with people who have mental health issues.

www.beyondblue.org.au

ADAVIC: Anxiety Disorders Association of Victoria

ADAVIC offers a range of services such as support groups, phone support, workshops and seminars, an on-line bookstore and resource centre for people who suffer from anxiety related disorders, their carers and friends and family.

www.adavic.org.au

GROW:

GROW is a community organisation working towards mental health through mutual help and a 12-step program of recovery.

www.grow.net.au

Eating Disorders Foundation of Victoria:

EDFV connects those lives are affected by eating disorders with the people, services and the hope they need for recovery.

www.eatingdisorders.org.au

Reconnexion:

Reconnexion is a specialist treatment services and supports – including counselling, group work for people suffering **anxiety, depression or related disorders**.

www.reconnexion.org.au

Mental Health First Aid:

Mental Health First Aid is a 12 hour training course developed in order to help people provide initial support for someone with a mental health problem. It is now auspiced by ORYGEN Research Centre at the University of Melbourne, Dept of Psychiatry. MHFA training courses are available to individuals, community groups and organisations.

www.mhfa.com.au

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Legal assistance

The **Mental Health Legal Centre** provides a free and confidential legal service to anyone who has experienced mental illness in Victoria where their legal problem relates to their mental illness

Telephone advice line Mon/Wed/Fri 3-5PM or Tue/Thurs 6.30 -8.30PM

Phone: 03 9629-4422, Country Callers: 1800-555-887

[Click here:](#)

Office of the Public Advocate: protects the rights of Victorians with a disability

www.publicadvocate.vic.gov.au

Consumer rights and advocacy

The **Victorian Mental Illness Awareness Council** is a Victorian not-for-profit organisation whose purpose is to provide support, advocacy and referrals to people who are experiencing, or have experienced in the past, emotional or mental distress. The VMIAAC also provides information and education about mental health services to consumers of mental health services and the wider community.

Phone: 03 9387 8317

www.vmiac.com.au

Other useful support numbers

Lifeline: 131114

www.lifeline.org.au

Suicide call back service: 1300 659 467

[Click here](#)

Suicide helpline 1300 651 251

www.suicideline.org.au

Kids Help Line: 1800 55 1800

www.kidshelp.com.au

Men's Help Line 1300 78 99 78

www.menslineaus.org.au

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