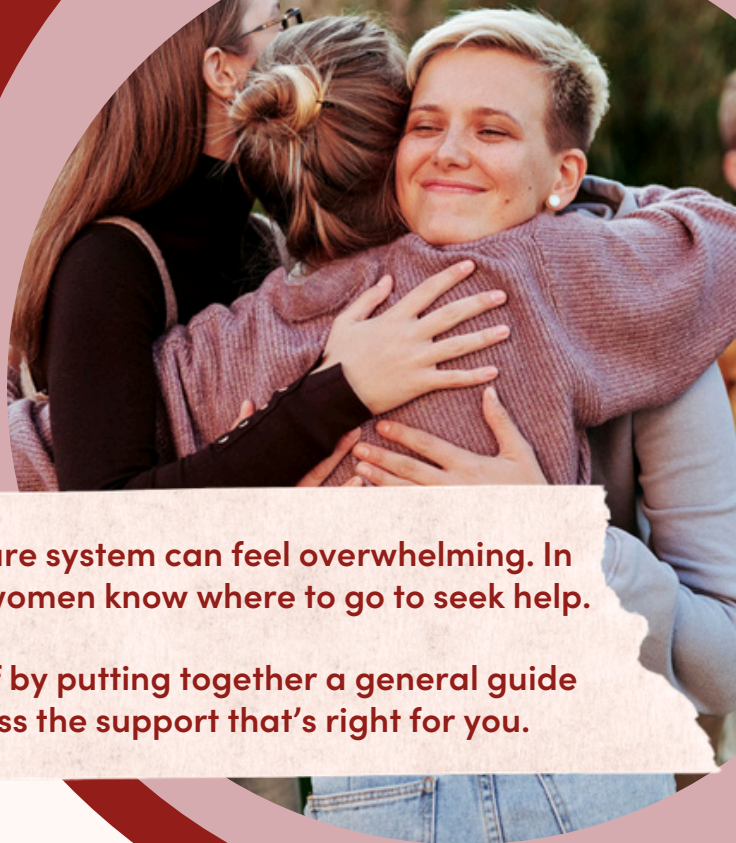


How do I navigate the Australian Mental Health System?



Navigating the Australian mental health care system can feel overwhelming. In fact, our research tells us that only 3 in 10 women know where to go to seek help.

So we've tried to take some of the load-off by putting together a general guide with some clear steps you can take to access the support that's right for you.

IF YOU NEED IMMEDIATE SUPPORT

Call 000 (triple zero) or go to your local emergency department if you feel like you're in immediate danger.

Crisis helplines: If you are in urgent need of support, services listed in the next section, like Lifeline (13 11 14), Beyond Blue (1300 22 4636), and the Suicide Call Back Service (1300 659 467) offer immediate, free, and confidential counselling.

UNDERSTANDING YOUR NEEDS

Assess the level of care you need: If you're experiencing mild or moderate mental health issues, you might benefit from talking therapies, support groups, or general counselling. For more severe conditions, you'll need specialised mental health services.

Talk to your GP (General Practitioner): A GP is usually the first point of call. They can assess your mental health and refer you to appropriate services, including creating a Mental Health Treatment Plan. This plan enables you to access Medicare rebates for psychological services (up to 10 sessions annually) (NSW Health)(AIHW).

ACCESSING PUBLIC OR PRIVATE CARE

Public mental health services: These services are available through local health networks and hospitals and are typically accessed via referral from your GP. Public services include community mental health services, acute care, and specialised psychiatric services (AIHW).

Importantly, the Australian Government is expanding the national footprint of **Medicare Mental Health Centres**, which offer free, walk in mental health care including after-hours support.

Private mental health services: If you have private health insurance, you may have access to private psychologists, psychiatrists, or other therapists. Keep in mind that private services can come with out-of-pocket costs, but they may provide faster access (National Mental Health Commission)(NSW Health). Some private services will still require a referral from your GP before you can make an appointment.



NAVIGATING MEDICARE AND REBATES

Mental Health Care Plans (MHCP): Under Medicare, Australians are entitled to [10 rebated therapy sessions](#) with a psychologist or mental health professional. To access these rebates, you need to obtain a referral and Mental Health Treatment Plan from your GP (NSW Health).

Bulk Billing: These are free services with no out of-pocket costs. There are a select few services on offer, like [Medicare Mental Health Centres](#), which offer free, walk-in mental health care including after-hours support; and online, bulk billed Psychology sessions with a Mental Health Care Plan through [MeHelp](#).

Medicare-subsidised or rebated psychiatry sessions: If you require a psychiatrist, psychologist or care from other mental health specialists – there are usually private fees to see these specialists outside of a Public Hospital setting. Private specialists usually involve fees, but Medicare often covers part of the consultation.

CONSIDER GOVERNMENT & COMMUNITY SUPPORT PROGRAMS

Head to Health: This national portal provides information and links to digital and face-to-face mental health services available across the country. It's a good starting point for finding local and online resources.

Peer support programs: Programs like [Pink Elephants](#) (for those suffering pregnancy loss) and [QLife](#) (for LGBTIQ+ individuals) offer support from peers who may have faced similar challenges.

Specialised services for complex mental health: Organisations like [SANE Australia](#) and [Blue Knot Foundation](#) provide resources, education, and online support for those dealing with complex mental health challenges and trauma.

THERE ARE SPECIALISED SUPPORT SERVICES FOR WOMEN AVAILABLE

Organisations like [PANDA](#) and the [Gidget Foundation](#) provide Perinatal Mental Health support for women dealing with perinatal anxiety and depression, while **COPE's** [eCOPE Directory](#) can help you find specialists with experience in perinatal mental health.

[Pink Elephants](#) offer latest resources, information and peer-support for anyone impacted by early pregnancy loss and miscarriage.

[Herspace](#) is a specialised service offering mental health and trauma recovery services to women survivors of exploitation and modern slavery.

[Transwomen's Wellbeing Program](#) provides 1:1 case management and counselling, psychosocial workshops and social support groups to young trans women in QLD.

Community health centres also offer mental health services tailored to women's needs (NSW Health).

FOLLOW-UP AND CONTINUITY OF CARE

Stay connected with your GP: Regular checkins with your doctor help monitor your progress and ensure your care plan is updated as needed.

Access ongoing therapy: Even after the initial 10 Medicare-subsidised sessions, you can request additional support if necessary, particularly through referrals to psychiatric care or specialised services.

Need *Immediate* Support? ♥



NATIONAL CRISIS TELEPHONE HOTLINE NUMBERS:

Lifeline (24/7 crisis support and suicide prevention)

Phone: 13 11 14 | SMS: 0477 13 11 14
www.lifeline.org.au/crisis-chat/

1800RESPECT (24/7 support for domestic, family, or sexual violence)

Phone: 1800 737 732
www.1800respect.org.au

Suicide Call Back Service (for anyone affected by suicide - 24/7)

Phone: 1300 659 467
www.suicidecallbackservice.org.au

QLife (for LGBTIQ+ individuals seeking peer support)

Phone: 1800 184 527 Available 3pm to midnight (AEST)
qlife.org.au

Beyond Blue (anxiety, depression, general mental health - 24/7)

Phone: 1300 22 4636
www.beyondblue.org.au/get-support/talk-to-a-counsellor/chat

OTHER FREE SUPPORT SERVICES

MeHelp (Bulk Billed Psychology Online)

Phone: 1300 323 411
www.mehelp.com.au

SPECIFIC SUPPORT SERVICES

Medicare Mental Health Centres (free, immediate, short and medium Term mental health care)

Phone: 1800 595 212
www.health.gov.au/our-work/medicare-mental-healthcentres?language=en

Eating Disorders Families Australia (for carers of loved ones with eating disorders)

Phone: 1800 33 4673
edfa.org.au/counselling-service/

Blue Knot Foundation (complex trauma)

Phone: 1300 657 380 (Monday to Sunday, 9am - 5pm)
blueknot.org.au

13YARN (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander crisis support)

Phone: 13 92 76
www.13yarn.org.au

Butterfly Foundation (eating disorders and body image concerns)

Phone: 1800 33 4673
butterfly.org.au

Open Arms (24/7 mental health assessment and counselling for Australian veterans and their families)

Phone: 1800 011 046
www.openarms.gov.au

PANDA (Perinatal Anxiety & Depression Australia)

Phone: 1300 726 306 (Monday to Saturday)
www.panda.org.au

SANE Australia (complex mental health issues)

Phone: 1800 187 263 (Monday to Friday, 10am - 8pm)
www.sane.org/get-support/sanesupport-services

FOR FAMILIES OR CHILDREN

Kids Helpline (for kids aged 5-25)

Phone: 1800 55 1800
kidshelpline.com.au/get-help/webchat-counselling

General and Multicultural Support:

Head to Health (mental health navigation for all Australians)
www.medicarementalhealth.gov.au

headspace (youth mental health services)

Phone: 1800 650 890
headspace.org.au

MeHelp (Bulk Billed Psychology Online)

Phone: 1300 323 411
www.mehelp.com.au

Embrace Multicultural Mental Health

(resources for culturally diverse communities)
embracementalhealth.org.au