



About Forensicare

Forensicare is Victoria's leading provider of forensic mental health care. We work to meet the needs of consumers with serious mental illnesses across the justice system, mental health sectors and the community.

Our services deliver a range of mental health programs targeted at patients with different needs at different stages of recovery; from early intervention and prevention, inpatient care, rehabilitation and community transition support. These services are delivered through:

- Thomas Embling Hospital, a secure mental health hospital
- Prison mental health services
- Community Forensic Mental Health Service

We also work in partnership with Swinburne University of Technology through the Centre for Forensic Behavioural Science to deliver a forensic mental health research program, specialist training and ongoing professional education.



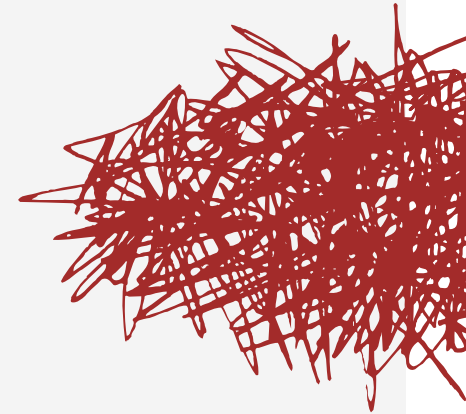
Forensicare

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MENTAL HEALTH ADVICE AND RESPONSE SERVICE

Community Forensic Mental Health Service



Forensicare

The Mental Health Advice and Response Service (MHARS) plays a key role in the public mental health response to the over representation of people with mental illness in the criminal justice system.

Who we are

The County Court Mental Health Advice and Response Service (MHARS) provides advice and support to people involved in the court system who may need mental health treatment. With the help of an experienced mental health clinician, the program can help court users:

- With an existing mental illness
- Who require mental health treatment and support
- Who present with possible mental illness symptoms

What we do

We help people involved in the criminal justice system by providing mental health advice and support to ensure timely mental health treatment for court users when they need it.

We can assist the court with:

- Identifying individuals with a mental illness
- Providing timely advice on services and treatments to reduce delays in court proceedings
- Linkages and referrals to mental health treatment providers for court users for early intervention

We also provide specialist clinical mental health advice to Judges, court services, correctional services, and court users to ensure appropriate mental health interventions and for people who are in custody. Please note: the County Court MHARS program does not provide direct, ongoing treatment services.

How we do it

After a court user is referred to our program, we can:

- Provide mental state assessments and court reports to support informed judicial decisions to reduce delays in court proceedings and remands
- Provide advice on diverting clients from the judicial system (if possible) through mental health legislation
- Establish links to mental health providers for court users as required
- Refer people to appropriate services for further testing and treatment if necessary (as listed under the *Mental Health Act 2014*)
- Liaise with public and private service providers, facilitating streamlined inter-agency collaboration
- Screen and assess people being considered for a community-based order who may not have a documented or self-reported mental illness

We can also provide education and training on mental illness and the mental health system—as well as related legislation—for court users and staff.

Referrals

Anyone can refer to our County Court MHARS program, including:

- Judges
- Court Assessment and Prosecution Services (CAPS)
- Court Integrated Services Program (CISP)
- Court personnel
- Legal practitioners
- Police and prison-based services
- Court welfare and disability services
- Forensic medical officers and custodial health services
- Area mental health services
- Family and carers
- Self-referral

Referral criteria:

You can make a MHARS referral for anyone appearing in court or custody who:

- Has a mental illness
- Presents with behaviour that may be related to a mental illness

To make a referral, please contact the Mental Health Advice and Response Service clinician at the County Court.

Melbourne County Court
250 William Street
Melbourne VIC 2000
Email: mharscounty@forensicare.vic.gov.au