

Information for services

May 2025

This information is designed to assist mental health service providers when referring people to Independent Mental Health Advocacy (IMHA).

IMHA is a state-wide advocacy service for people receiving, or worried about receiving, compulsory treatment under the *Mental Health and Wellbeing Act 2022* (Vic). IMHA is one of a range of mechanisms established to achieve the supported decision-making objectives of the Act.

What does IMHA do?

IMHA advocates support and assist eligible people to make, and be involved in, decisions about their mental health assessment, treatment and recovery. This may include:

- talking with a person to discuss and clarify their preferences and wishes
- providing information about the mental health system and assisting a person to understand their rights and to act on them e.g. in respect of advance statements of preferences and/or nominated support persons
- engaging directly with a person's treating team, support people or other services, or providing support and coaching for a person to self-advocate
- referring people to other support services, if the person requests this.

Advocates are always guided by what the person wants, rather than what may be considered by others to be in their best interests. Advocates do not act without a person's consent. Advocates are required to share information provided by clinicians and support people with the consumers they are working with.

Eligibility for IMHA

Anyone currently receiving, or worried about receiving, compulsory treatment in Victoria is eligible for assistance from IMHA. This includes people receiving treatment in an inpatient or forensic unit, or in the community. Advocates determine the level of service to be provided when a person engages with the service.

How to make a referral

People receiving compulsory treatment, or workers who wish to make a referral, can:

- see an advocate in person at outreach locations (inpatient and forensic units)
- call the IMHA phone line: [1300 947 820](tel:1300947820), from 9.30am–4.30pm, seven days a week (except public holidays)
- submit the online form, via the IMHA website www.imha.vic.gov.au or
- email at contact@imha.vic.gov.au.

Our advocates are located in Bendigo, Broadmeadows, Dandenong, Frankston, Geelong, Melbourne CBD, Ringwood, Shepparton, and Sunshine, and we provide outreach across the state.

When making a referral, we will ask whether the person consents to the referral being made. If they do not consent to the referral, consent will need to be obtained before IMHA can assist.