

## Consumer and Carer Participation

What is consumer participation?

Advocacy groups

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People live up to or down to the expectations of others and the opportunities offered to them.

### What is consumer/carers participation?

Consumers and carers provide valuable insights derived from their lived experience. Consumer and carer participation is fundamental to building effective working relationships and better services, both of which achieve more favourable outcomes for all stakeholders.

Consumer participation is a process whereby consumers and carers take part in decision-making about:

- their own service needs
- service development, planning, implementation and evaluation
- policy development and review
- training and quality assurance in service delivery
- advocacy to change public policy and legislation

Participation implies the sharing of information, opinions, and also decision-making power between consumers, carers and service providers. Participation means joint problem solving, decision-making and responsibility. Participation can occur at all levels of mental health service delivery.

If you are interested in consumer/carers participation talk to your service provider about how you can get involved or contact mental health advocacy groups.

### Advocacy groups

Victorian Mental Illness Awareness Council/VMIAC Phone: (03) 9380 3900 [www.vimac.org.au](http://www.vimac.org.au)

Mental Health Foundation of Australia (Victoria) Phone: 03 98261422 [www.mhfa.org](http://www.mhfa.org)

Victoria's Mental Health Services [www.health.vic.gov.au/mentalhealth/links.htm](http://www.health.vic.gov.au/mentalhealth/links.htm)

Our Consumer Place [www.ourconsumerplace.com.au](http://www.ourconsumerplace.com.au)

Independent Mental Health Advocacy (to help support mental health consumers to understand and advocate for their rights) [www.imha.vic.gov.au](http://www.imha.vic.gov.au) 1300 974 820

## Benefits of consumer participation

- consumer and carer empowerment
- builds positive self-worth and confidence
- engagement in valued and meaningful activity
- self-determination
- build transferable skills
- linkages to the community
- build trust in others and the organisation
- build teamwork skills
- become part of an organisation and see the bigger picture.
- build friendships
- address multiple aspects of recovery

### Organisational benefits

- consumers can improve services
- consumers who participate and are included are more loyal to the organisation
- consumers who are aware of funding and program guidelines are more understanding and have more realistic expectations of the organisation and its workers

## Legislation

Strengthening consumer participation in Victoria's public mental health services: [www.health.vic.gov.au/mentalhealth/publications/cons-part.pdf](http://www.health.vic.gov.au/mentalhealth/publications/cons-part.pdf)

Mental health statements of rights and responsibilities: [www.health.gov.au](http://www.health.gov.au)

National Standards for Mental Health Services (Standard 3), Australian Government 2010: [www.health.gov.au](http://www.health.gov.au)

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