

State Government of Victoria, Australia, Department of Health: Victorian Mental Health Services

2015 factsheet: A Guide To Mental Health Terminology

## A Guide To Mental Health Terminology

This guide aims to provide a quick reference for anybody seeking to understand terms commonly used by mental health services.

[Show All](#) |

[A](#) | [B](#) | [C](#) | [D](#) | [E](#) | [H](#) | [I](#) | [M](#) | [N](#) | [O](#) | [P](#) | [R](#) | [S](#) | [T](#) | [V](#)

### Schizophrenia/Schizophrenic Disorder

A group of mental illnesses where the essential and most obvious features are the presence of psychotic symptoms during the active phase of the illness. There may also be a loss in the person's ability to perform some life tasks, such as relating to others, maintaining employment and domestic duties.

### Screening

A process that enables a duty worker to obtain enough information from the person requesting service so that the duty worker can guide them to an appropriate service within or outside public mental health services. The duty worker will take responsibility for referring a person to an outside agency or arrange an intake assessment with the appropriate local mental health service.

### Security Patient

Patients detained and treated in a designated mental health service under a Court Secure Treatment Order or patients who are transferred from prison under a Secure Treatment Order for treatment in a designated mental health service.

### Sedation

See medical sedation.

## Severe Mental Illness

A mental illness in which a person's ability to think, communicate and behave appropriately is so impaired that it interferes with the person's ability to deal with ordinary demands of life. Without effective treatment and support, the outcome for the person may be significant impairment, disability and/or disadvantage.

## Severe Personality Disorder

A term frequently used to describe a serious form of personality disorder. See borderline personality disorder.

## Social Workers

Health professionals who have a qualification in social work and have specialised in mental health. They form part of the multidisciplinary team and typical functions include counselling, advocacy, family work, and social and community development.

## Substance Related Disorders

Changes to a person's physical health and behaviour associated with the overuse of alcohol or drugs. For example, there may be an inability to perform their job or household duties, problems in personal and social relationships, and faulty memory. There may also be frequent legal problems such as drink driving or disorderly conduct.

Substance related disorder is not a mental illness and requires very different specialist skills from those offered by mental health services. However, people with a substance related disorder can also suffer from a mental illness and others with long standing substance abuse can develop symptoms of a mental illness.

## Suicidal

A person is regarded as suicidal when they have given strong indications or have intentions of taking their own life.

## Symptom

Changes in a person's mind or body that indicate they may be suffering from a particular illness.

Show All |

[A](#) | [B](#) | [C](#) | [D](#) | [E](#) | [H](#) | [I](#) | [M](#) | [N](#) | [O](#) | [P](#) | [R](#) | [S](#) | [T](#) | [V](#)