

Family Violence Service Charter

Family Violence is an abuse of an individual's Human Right. Everyone has a universal human right to be free from violence.

Berry Street provides Specialist Family Violence Services in the Northern region of Melbourne (Northern Specialist Family Violence Service) and in the Western Region (Western Specialist Family Violence Service).

Victim survivors' right to safety is the primary purpose of our Specialist Family Violence Services and it will be upheld in every aspect of our practice.

Our services support victim survivors of family violence and their children, inclusive of cisgendered heterosexual women and people from the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex and Queer Community (LGBTIQ+) through a range of specialist family violence programs. Some of our services also work with cisgendered men in heterosexual relationships who are identified as victims of family violence and perpetrators of family violence.

We want to make sure that we provide you with a service that is responsive to your individual needs. This Charter outlines our commitment to you while you are accessing support and assistance from Berry Street. We are committed to providing high quality support to all of our service users without discrimination.

Our Service Commitment

Our services, assistance and support will:

- be free of charge
- be inclusive and respectful
- be culturally responsive
- recognise your individual needs and circumstances
- inform you about your rights and about the options and services available to you and your children
- advocate for you and your children
- support you in making decisions for you and your children
- help you to think about any current risks to you and your children and your safety

Your Rights

Berry Street specialist family violence services are committed to ensuring that you are aware of your rights while receiving support from us. When accessing our services, you and your children have the right to:

- feel and be safe
- be listened to and feel heard
- be treated with dignity and respect regarding your cultural identity, ability, gender, sexual orientation, spiritually and or religion
- be provided with accurate information
- make your own decisions
- make a complaint and/or provide feedback about the service
- be private and confidential*

* Please see section: *When can information be discussed with other people without my consent?*

Working Together

All our services and environments are violence free spaces. All people who access our services and programs should feel and be safe. Berry Street is committed to supporting all people who access our service to feel safe and listened to.

As we work together to assist and support you, we ask that you:

- treat our staff and other service users with respect
- provide us with your feedback so we know what we are doing well and where we need to improve.

Privacy

Your participation in a Berry Street Family Violence Service is voluntary. The more relevant information we know about your circumstances, the better we will be able to match our service and advice support to your needs. However, it is always your right to decide what you want to tell us.

The information you provide may also be used to assist with referring you to other services, and we will always seek your consent to do so. Non-identifying information may also be used for reporting to funding bodies on the number of clients we are working with, and for quality assurance, research and evaluation purposes.

Accessing Information

The Information Privacy Act enables you to see any information that Berry Street holds about you. You can request to access your Berry Street records by asking the staff member with whom you have regular contact or the Senior Manager of the Specialist Family Violence Service. Alternatively, you can contact the Berry Street Privacy Officer by telephoning **03 9429 9266**.

Information Sharing Provisions[^]

Under the Child Information Sharing Scheme (CISS) and the Family Violence Information Sharing Scheme (FVISS), approved organisations (such as Berry Street) are able to share information without consent with other approved organisations, if the information promotes child wellbeing and safety, or relates to the assessment and management of family violence risk for a child. Consent is still required from adult victim survivors, unless the information relates to assessing or managing a risk to a child victim survivor.

We will seek your consent prior to sharing information whenever possible, however in instances of urgency and high risk this may not always be possible.

When can information be discussed with other people without my consent?

- Where there are serious concerns about your safety, or the safety of your children,
- When we are mandated to provide information for court proceedings,
- If we believe there is a serious threat to public health and safety.

We will do our best to keep you informed about what information we have shared and the organisation that we have shared information with.

[^] Please also refer to the Consent to share information with other service providers form for further information

Tell us what you think

You have the right to give feedback or complain about any matters regarding the service we provide.

If you have an issue with our services, we want to work with you to find a solution.

Your feedback helps us to continually improve our service. We want to hear about what went well or what didn't and appreciate all types of feedback.

It is safe to complain or provide negative feedback and it will not impact on your eligibility to access a service or negatively impact on the service we are currently providing. You also have the right to make a complaint anonymously.

Any person of any age can provide Berry Street with feedback or a complaint or have someone do so on their behalf. You can provide us with a complaint, suggestion or feedback by:

- Speaking with your Berry Street worker
- Calling and asking to speak with the Team Leader or Senior Manager of the service
- Completing the feedback and complaints form and posting it back, or leaving it at any Berry Street office
- Completing the feedback form on our website www.berrystreet.org.au/feedbackform
- E-mailing us at feedback@berrystreet.org.au
- Writing or speaking to your nearest Regional Director

If you need support, we can also help you to provide feedback or make a complaint.

Complaints

We will endeavour to resolve complaints as quickly as possible. We will contact you within two working days to provide an initial response and outline how we are dealing with the complaint. If you are unhappy with the way your complaint has been dealt with or the outcome, you have the right to appeal. You can appeal the outcome of a complaint by requesting one from the manager responsible for the complaint within one month of it being resolved.

You also have the right to contact an independent body, such as the Homelessness Advocacy Service, the funding body, on **1800 066 256**.

Alternatively, the Victorian Ombudsman can look into complaints made about the actions of a registered community service. **P:** 03 9613 6222 **E:** ombudvic@ombudsman.vic.gov.au **W:** www.ombudsman.vic.gov.au

If you are a victim of crime you also have the option to seek a review of how your complaint was handled by the Victims of Crime Commissioner. Their role is to ensure that complaints from victims of crime are handled according to the principles of the Victims of Crime Charter. For more information about the Commissioner and the Charter please visit www.victimsofcrimecommissioner.vic.gov.au.