



Down Syndrome Victoria
Client Handbook

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Table of Contents

About Down Syndrome Victoria	01
Contact Details	02
Our Services	03
Service Quality	04
Your Rights	05
Diversity & Participation	06
Advocacy	07
Privacy & Confidentiality	08
Feedback, Compliments & Complaints	09
Accessing Our Services	12
Exiting Our Services	14
Fees and Charges	15
Freedom From Harm, Abuse & Neglect	15
Occupational Health & Safety	16
Community Participation & Inclusion	16

About Down Syndrome Victoria

Down Syndrome Victoria (DSV) is Victoria's statewide peak organisation representing people with Down syndrome and their families. It is a not-for-profit organisation established in 1978 to provide support, information and resources to people with Down syndrome, their families and the broader community.

We work alongside people with Down syndrome and their families, so that they may reach their full potential and live the lives they choose. We provide parents, families, professionals and friends of people with Down syndrome with support, information, resources and encouragement.

Please note that Down Syndrome Victoria does not provide a crisis service. For urgent assistance please call:

Parentline  **13 22 89**

Lifeline  **13 11 14**

Kids Helpline  **1800 551 800**
(for callers aged 5 – 25 years)

Down Syndrome Victoria is a member of Down Syndrome Australia. We operate in accordance with a Constitution and are led by an Executive Officer, who reports to a Board of Management.

All of our operations are based on the following values:

- **Rights** - We believe people with Down syndrome are individuals whose abilities, rights and dignity should be recognised, respected and promoted.
- **Self determination** - We believe people with Down syndrome should be the authors of their own lives, and should be provided with appropriate support to make meaningful choices.
- **Inclusion** - We believe people with Down syndrome should have the same rights, responsibilities and opportunities as all individuals in the community.
- **Resilience** - We believe resilient families will raise resilient individuals with Down syndrome who are more able to reach their full potential.
- **Support** - We believe peer support for people with Down syndrome and their families is critical to building individual and collective resilience.
- **Empowerment** - We believe we should work together: with people – we will not do to, or do for, but do with.

Contact Details

 **1300 658 873**  **info@dsav.asn.au**

 **18/71 Victoria Crescent, Abbotsford VIC 3067**

Our opening hours are **9:00am to 5:00pm, Monday to Thursday**.
Some services operate occasionally outside of these hours.

Our Services

We provide whole of life support services to people with Down syndrome and their families, at all stages of life, but particularly at times of diagnosis and at life's transition points. **This includes:**

- Prenatal support, including personal support for parents through our Family Support Team
- New parent support, including workshops, resources and connecting with other parents
- Ongoing and Adult support and support with post school transition, employment and accommodation options
- A statewide network of Support Groups, including MyTime and Club21, a peer support group for adults with Down syndrome
- Education support – including the Education Support Service (ESS), annual education conferences, workshops, information and support for teachers and parents
- Professional support
- Training and information workshops covering a wide range of Down syndrome and NDIS related topics
- Library facilities and resources for members including books, DVD's, kits and journals
- Systemic advocacy; working towards the full participation of people with Down syndrome in the economic and social life of the community
- National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) registered services including, but not limited to, support coordination services and increased social and community participation supports.

For more information about these services please call us on **1 300 658 873**, visit our website (downsyndromevictoria.org.au) or speak to a member of our staff.

Service Quality

To deliver services to people with Down syndrome, their families and support networks, Down Syndrome Victoria must comply with the Victorian Disability Act 2006 and the Victorian Human Services Standards. These are a set of standards that ensure that disability services provide the highest quality services.

The Human Services Standards are:

- **Empowerment:** People's rights are promoted and upheld;
- **Access and Engagement:** People's right to access transparent, equitable and integrated services is promoted and upheld;
- **Wellbeing:** People's right to wellbeing and safety is promoted and upheld; and
- **Participation:** People's right to choice, decision making and to actively participate as a valued member of their chosen community is promoted and upheld.

As set out in this handbook, Down Syndrome Victoria is committed to delivering services in compliance with these standards and to continuously improving our service delivery. We operate in accordance with comprehensive policies and procedures, which are reviewed regularly and incorporate client and other stakeholder feedback.

Your Rights

Down Syndrome Victoria respects and fully commits to upholding the rights of all people, including those with disabilities. We are also committed to ensuring you, our clients, are aware of your rights and responsibilities and can be confident in exercising them.

When you interact with Down Syndrome Victoria, you will:

- be respected and treated with dignity;
- have choice and control over your service delivery and have your autonomy and independence supported;
- receive high quality, safe and personally relevant services;
- have services provided by appropriately qualified staff;
- be assured that your personal and sensitive information is kept private and confidential;
- be provided with all the information you need to make informed decisions; and
- be supported to have a person of your choice support and advocate on your behalf;
- be supported by an interpreter or translator if required; and
- be encouraged and supported to pursue any complaints about our service provision.

You can request Down Syndrome Victoria's full Client Charter from any of our staff members.

Diversity & Participation

All aspects of Down Syndrome Victoria's service delivery promote clients' active participation and inclusion in the community. We support clients to develop and maintain their independence, problem solving, social, and self care skills; as appropriate to their age, developmental stage, cultural background or other support needs.

Ways we do this include:

- delivering services in a way that respects individuals' personal, gender, sexual, cultural, religious, or spiritual identity;
- employing and developing a diverse and culturally competent workforce;
- working collaboratively with disability-specific, mainstream, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (ATSI) and Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) services to support holistic service delivery; and
- using a strengths-based approach to identifying individual client needs and life goals, particularly in relation to recognising the importance of family, extended family, kinship, cultural, spiritual, language and community ties.

Interpreting and Translation

The delivery of safe, high-quality services relies on effective communication. Where required to support your interactions with us, interpreters and translators will be made available at no cost.

Advocacy

Down Syndrome Victoria continually strives to be a leading authoritative voice for the Down syndrome community. We are committed to the full participation of people with Down syndrome in the economic and social life of the community.

We do this by providing individual and family support based on a model of empowerment; by being a source of quality information and resources and through sharing our knowledge and experience.

Down Syndrome Victoria also fully supports your right to have an independent advocate support you in your interactions with us. If you'd like help finding an independent advocate, speak to one of our staff.

Alternatively, the following organisations can assist you:

Office of the Public Advocate

Phone: (03) 9603 9500

TTY: (03) 9603 9259

National Disability Advocacy Program (NDAP)

Use the Disability Advocacy Finder at:

<https://disabilityadvocacyfinder.dss.gov.au/disability/ndap>

Victorian Advocacy League for Individuals with Disability (VALiD)

Phone: (03) 9416 4003, Freecall (rural callers): 1800 655 570

Email: office@valid.org.au

Privacy and Confidentiality

Down Syndrome Victoria values and respects the privacy, confidentiality and dignity of our clients and their families, as well as our staff. We collect, use, protect and release personal information in full compliance with all relevant State and Federal privacy legislation.

Down Syndrome Victoria will only collect information necessary for safe and effective service delivery. We will only use private and sensitive information for the purpose it was collected, and will secure it safely. When we collect your information we will explain why we are collecting the information and how we plan to use it. We will only take photos or videos of you with your full and voluntary consent. Additionally, any photos or videos of you will only be used externally with your signed permission.

Information about you will only be released to other people or services with your informed consent, in an emergency, or where such disclosure is required or authorised by law.

You may access the information we hold about you, including in order to update or correct it, subject to certain exceptions. If you wish to access your information, please speak to a staff member.

When your information is no longer needed for the purpose for which it was obtained, we will destroy or permanently de-identify it.

You can request Down Syndrome Victoria's full Privacy Statement from any of our staff members.



Feedback, Compliments and Complaints

Compliments, complaints and other forms of feedback provide Down Syndrome Victoria with valuable information about client satisfaction and an opportunity to improve upon all aspects of our service.

We encourage feedback and comments on the services we provide, both positive and negative. Whether a compliment or complaint, your feedback will be treated with confidentiality and sensitivity.

Feedback, compliments and complaints can be lodged:

- directly with a staff member, either verbally or by submitting a completed Feedback and Complaints Form;
- by email to: info@dsav.asn.au;
- by phone on 1300 658 873;
- in writing to: Down Syndrome Victoria, 18/71 Victoria Cres, Abbotsford VIC 3067; or
- anonymously, using the Suggestion Box located at Down Syndrome Victoria's Office.

Feedback and Continuous Improvement

In addition to the above, Down Syndrome Victoria is continually seeking feedback on how we can improve the services we provide. This includes through biennial satisfaction surveys, requests for feedback by staff after you interact with us and involving clients and other stakeholders in our service delivery planning and review processes. Please feel free to provide any suggestions or ideas to a staff member.



Complaints

We encourage anyone with a complaint to speak directly to a Down Syndrome Victoria staff member in the first instance, who will attempt to resolve the issue immediately.

If the matter cannot be resolved promptly or within 1-2 working days, it will be escalated to Down Syndrome Victoria's Management Team as a grievance.

You can use Down Syndrome Victoria's Feedback and Complaints Form to formally lodge your grievance and a staff member can assist you to do this if you wish.

Your complaint will be formally acknowledged within two working days and a staff member will keep you updated regarding its resolution. Down Syndrome Victoria aims to respond to all complaints and grievances as quickly as possible, and within 28 days from acknowledgement.

If a complaint or grievance cannot be responded to in full within 28 days of acknowledgement, you will be provided with an update, which will include when a full response can be expected.

If you feel a complaint has not been sufficiently or appropriately addressed, you can seek further support from Down Syndrome Victoria's Executive Officer or the President of DSV's Board, or alternatively through any of the following agencies:

National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIS Participants)

Email: feedback@ndis.gov.au

Phone: 1800 800 110

Office of the Commissioner for Privacy and Data Protection

Phone: 1300 666 444

Online: www.cpdp.vic.gov.au

Victorian Department of Health and Human Services

Email: complaints.reception@dhhs.vic.gov.au

Phone: 1300 884 706

Victorian Ombudsman

Phone: (03) 9613 6222 or
(rural callers) 1800 806 314

Online: www.ombudsman.vic.gov.au



Australian Human Rights Commission

Phone: 1300 656 419

Online: www.humanrights.gov.au

Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission

Phone: 1300 735 135

Online: www.ibac.vic.gov.au

Victorian Disability Services Commission

Email: complaints@odsc.vic.gov.au

Phone: 1800 677 342 (TTY 1300 726 563)

Online: www.odsc.vic.gov.au

Skype: Call or email to make an appointment

Commission for Children and Young People Victoria

Email: childsafes@cyp.vic.gov.au

Phone: 1300 78 29 78

Office of the Public Advocate

Phone: 1300 309 337, (03) 9603 9500 or
TTY: (03) 9603 9259

Online: www.publicadvocate.vic.gov.au

NDIS participants purchasing products and services have rights and protections under the Australian Consumer Law (ACL), including provisions on customer guarantees and unfair contract terms. Consumer Affairs Victoria provides information and advice and in some cases, dispute resolution services for customer disputes under the ACL. In addition to Consumer Affairs Victoria, you can also contact the Australian Securities and Investments Commission (ASIC) if you have concerns regarding consumer protection in relation to your finances.

All feedback and complaints will be used by Down Syndrome Victoria to continuously improve our service delivery.



Accessing Down Syndrome Victoria's Services

We aim to provide accessible services to you that are safe, engaging and responsive to your support and communication needs.

Down Syndrome Victoria provides whole of life support services to people with Down syndrome and their families. Access to services is based on relative need, service capacity, the best interests of the person wishing to use our service and any potential impact on existing clients.

Anyone wishing to access our services must participate in an Intake Interview. Where required, we will provide you with information and support to access a person of your choice, such as an advocate, to assist you in this process. The purpose of this interview is to assess your needs and whether Down Syndrome Victoria is able to support you. You will be contacted within one working day of the Intake Interview and advised of the outcome.

If you are offered services and accept, we will work with you and your supporters to assess your needs and develop and agree upon a Service Agreement. This will be completed during an Assessment and Planning Interview, which will take place within 5-10 working days of your acceptance.

Once you are a client, we will review the provision of your supports every 6 months with you and your supporters. Flexibility will be provided in regards to the timing of review assessments, based on your needs and wishes, and you can request a review at any time.



Service Refusal

We will accept your choice if we offer you a service and you choose not to accept.

Down Syndrome Victoria may refuse to offer a person services where:

- they do not meet our eligibility requirements;
- other potential clients are assessed as a higher priority based on our Priority of Access considerations;
- we do not have the capacity to cater to additional clients; or
- we do not have the resources to cater to the specific needs of the person.

Where services cannot be provided, we will assist you with referrals and support to access alternative services.

Any person refused services has the right to appeal. Appeals should be directed in writing to Down Syndrome Victoria's Executive Officer.

Waiting List Processes

A person who meets Down Syndrome Victoria's eligibility requirements and cannot be offered a service due to lack of service capacity can elect to be placed on our Waiting List.

Potential clients on our waiting list will be contacted at least every three months to:

- advise them of their current status;
- check whether they want to remain on the list;
- provide referrals to other service providers if required; and
- advise the estimated wait time remaining.

Exiting Down Syndrome Victoria's Services

All clients have the right to exit Down Syndrome Victoria's services at any time and a decision to do so will not prejudice future access to the service. You must give us at least 2 weeks notice if you wish to leave our services before the end date in your Service Agreement.

All clients exiting the service will be offered an Exit Interview, where we can discuss the reason for them leaving and obtain feedback about how we can improve our processes. We also provide assistance and resources to support people exiting or changing services. This includes an agreed Exit Plan, as well as the identification of, referral to and support accessing alternative services.

Clients who have chosen to exit our services have the right to re-access services within a 1-month period of exiting, without having to follow formal access processes, provided the necessary resources are available.

If you wish to end your service provision, please speak to a Down Syndrome Victoria staff member.

Service Termination

Down Syndrome Victoria may terminate a client's services when:

- they are unwilling over a period of time to work towards agreed goals;
- other people using the service, staff or the person themselves are at risk of harm;
- financial requirements are not being met;
- severe incompatibility with other clients using the service is displayed; or
- dramatic health changes require significantly increased levels of care or a service model not provided by Down Syndrome Victoria.



Any person whose services are terminated has the right to appeal. Appeals should be directed in writing to Down Syndrome Victoria's Executive Officer.

Fees and Charges

Fees and charges for our services vary depending on the service and the source of funding for that service (e.g. government funded or client funded). We will discuss prices with you before providing services and include all fees in a Service Agreement. The Service Agreement contains detailed information about the services we will provide you and when fees must be paid. This must be agreed to by you before services can commence.

Down Syndrome Victoria will provide you with regular invoices and statements to assist you to manage payment for our services. If you have difficulty paying your fees for any reason, we encourage you to discuss this with a staff member so that mutually acceptable payment arrangements can be put in place.

Freedom from Harm, Abuse and Neglect

When visiting our office or taking part in our services, you have the right to be free from harm and any form of abuse or neglect. Down Syndrome Victoria treats any allegation of abuse, assault or neglect very seriously. Allegations may be subject to both mandatory reporting and police involvement. If you have any concerns or are aware of a situation where abuse or neglect may be occurring, please notify a Down Syndrome Victoria staff member.

Down Syndrome Victoria employs skilled staff who respect the rights of people with disability, are aware of current policies and legislation pertaining to abuse, neglect and unexplained absences and will support people and their families, guardians and advocates to access complaint mechanisms and raise any concerns they have about our services. All staff undergo comprehensive criminal history screening and other mandatory checks prior to employment.



Occupational Health and Safety

Down Syndrome Victoria is committed to providing services in a safe and healthy environment. Occupational Health and Safety (OH&S) is the responsibility of all DSV stakeholders – including staff, volunteers, clients, families, carers and visitors. We ask that you report any hazards or risks you become aware of and act in a way that protects yours and others' health and safety when visiting our office or participating in our services.

Community Participation and Inclusion

Down Syndrome Victoria is committed to working with you to dismantle barriers, change attitudes and promote positive attitudes to create opportunities for your full inclusion and participation in your community. We work closely with a range of organisations to support you and encourage you to speak to a staff member if you have any specific needs or goals that could be met by another organisation.

Other Support & Assistance

Carers Victoria Counselling

☎ 1800 242 636

www.carersvictoria.org.au/how-we-help/counselling

Centre for Developmental Disability Health Victoria

☎ 03 9792 7888

www.cddh.monashhealth.org

Association for Children with a Disability

☎ 03 9880 7000

www.acd.org.au

Genetic Support Network of Victoria

☎ 03 8341 6315

www.gsnv.org.au

This is a selection of organisations
Down Syndrome Victoria suggests you contact.
Please speak to any of our staff members for more options.



Down Syndrome
Victoria