

Supporting recovery for children and young people

Frequently asked questions for
parents and carers

Getting help for children and young people is important to their health and wellbeing. There are specialised services in your local community that can provide information and extra support for children and young people. The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development has developed an information brochure for parents/carers on accessing these specialised services in your local community. This brochure can be found online at <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/bushfires/support/parents.htm>.

Below are some frequently asked questions and answers that will provide you with more specific information on accessing support for your child from an allied health professional.

Who should I speak to if I need information or advice?

Maternal and Child Health Nurses

Maternal and Child Health (MCH) nurses are registered nurses with extra qualifications in midwifery and maternal and child health who provide free services for parents/carers with children from birth to school age. There are MCH nurses in each local government area who can provide you with information on:

- The health and physical development of your child
- The physical and emotional effects of a baby on the family
- Your own health and wellbeing

If you have not had contact with your local MCH nurse (ie. because you have moved or have been away), contact your local council for details of the nearest Maternal and Child Health service

General Practitioners

General Practitioners (GP) provide health care for a wide range of physical and mental health problems. Your GP can provide you with support and advice on a wide range of issues including:

- Physical illness or injuries
- Emotional issues (including stress, problems with relationships, school, family or work, depression)
- Diet, nutrition, exercise and relaxation, smoking, alcohol and other drug use
- General health check-ups

Your GP can also refer you or your child to an allied health professional for specialised support. If you don't have a GP speak to your Bushfire Case Manager or contact your local Division of General Practice:

- **North East Valley Division of General Practice:** 9496 4333
- **Eastern Ranges General Practice Association:** 9739 6751
- **Central Highlands General Practice Network:** 5428 4848
- **Northern Division of General Practice:** 8480 4617
- **North East Victorian Division of General Practice:** 5754 1226
- **Central Victoria General Practice Network:** 5441 7806
- **West Victoria Division of General Practice:** 5352 4804 or 5381 1756
- **Central West Gippsland Division of General Practice:** 5126 2899
- **GP Alliance - South Gippsland:** 5674 3105



Every
child,
every
opportunity



Bushfire Case Managers

Bushfire Case Managers provide Victorians affected by the recent bushfires with support to access assistance with accommodation, finance, personal assistance, counselling, employment, education, health and legal services. Bushfire Case Managers work with individuals and families to determine their needs, prioritise the work that will be conducted, follow up on the agreed actions and report back to families.

Individuals can access Bushfire Case Managers by calling the Victorian Bushfire Case Management Service Line on 1800 050 400. Alternatively, you can register for support from a Bushfire Case Manager by speaking with staff at community hubs

Specialised support from allied health professionals

Allied health professionals are specialists who may be able to assist you if you're experiencing difficulties or having problems. They include professionals like social workers, psychologists, mental health nurses, occupational therapists and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health workers with specific mental health qualifications. These professionals can provide specialised support for your child outside of the kindergarten or school setting, which may include behavioural therapy, counselling, play or art therapy

When should I seek a referral for my child to an allied health professional?

Many people are unsure when to seek support from an allied health professional. You may want to talk to the welfare staff at your child's kindergarten or school, to the school's Student Support Services Officer or to your GP if you have any concerns about your child.

Who can access support services from an allied health professional?

Any person who has a Medicare card (including a temporary Medicare card) and has been affected by the recent Victorian bushfires can seek a referral to an allied health professional.

Who can refer my child to an allied health professional?

Your local GP or your Bushfire Case Manager can provide your child with a referral to an allied health professional.

How do I get a referral?

Your GP or your family's Bushfire Case Manager can provide you with a referral to an allied health professional.

What happens if I don't have a Bushfire Case Manager?

If you don't have a Bushfire Case Manager you need to register with the Victorian Bushfire Case Management Service by calling 1800 050 400 or by speaking to staff at your local Community Service Hub. If you don't have a GP you can speak to your Bushfire Case Manager or contact your local Division of General Practice. Contact details for local Divisions of General Practice can be found in the 'General Practitioner' section of this brochure (above).

Can I choose the allied health professional that I would like my child referred to?

This may be possible, but talk to your GP or Bushfire Case Manager before they make the referral/ Depending on your child's needs, you may like to ask your GP or Bushfire Case Manager for a referral to an allied health professional who has specific experience in working with children.

What happens if my child is already seeing an allied health professional?

Wherever possible, GPs and Bushfire Case Managers will try to ensure that your child continues to work with the same allied health professional if that is your wish. However, your child's current allied health professional will need to be registered as a provider with either the Better Outcomes in Mental Health program or Better Access in Mental Health program in order for your child to access free (or low cost) services.

How long can my child access support from an allied health professional?

If your child has been directly impacted by the bushfires, he or she can access as many sessions as they need with an allied health professional for one year.

Where are allied health professionals located?

There are a variety of allied health professionals who are either located in or able to provide services to areas affected by the bushfires. You will need to discuss with your GP or Bushfire Case Manager where you live and any difficulties with travel, as this may play a part in determining which allied health professional your child is referred to.

If we are no longer living in an area affected by the bushfires, can my child still access support from an allied health professional?

Regardless of where your child is currently living or attending kindergarten or school, if they were directly affected by the bushfires then they can access support from an allied health professional. If you are unsure about whether your child is eligible you should contact your local Division of General Practice or your Bushfire Case Manager.

Bushfire Psychological Counselling program

The Bushfire Psychological Counselling program will provide people affected by the bushfires with up to six counselling sessions through a specially designed voucher system. Individual, couple or family counselling can be accessed through this program. Vouchers are provided to individuals, which means that each person in your family who was directly affected by the bushfires can apply for six vouchers. You do not need to seek a referral from your GP or Bushfire Case Manager to access counseling vouchers under this program.

Who can access the Bushfire Psychological Counselling program?

People eligible to access the Bushfire Psychological Counselling Voucher program include:

- People who have received grants paid by the Victorian Bushfire Appeal Fund
- People who have registered with the Victorian Bushfire Case Management Service
- Dependent children of people eligible for the above
- People who have been directly affected by the bushfires

How can I access the Bushfire Psychological Counselling program?

You will need to apply for vouchers with your Bushfire Case Manager, at your local Community Service Hubs, online at www.dhs.vic.gov.au/bushfireappeal/Fund-Payments/psychological-support-package or by calling 1800 180 213.

Can I access this program and access extra support from an allied health professional under either the Better Outcome or Better Access program?

Yes. People accessing services via the Bushfire Psychological Counselling Voucher program can do so in addition to any support they are currently receiving or are likely to receive from an allied health professional. Once you have registered with your Bushfire Case Manager, at your local Community Service Hub or online, you will be provided with your vouchers and an information package.

For additional information on the Bushfire Psychological Counselling Voucher program see

<http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/bushfireappeal/Fund-Payments/support-payments/psychological-support-package>