

The Australian Charter of Healthcare Rights in Victoria



Your healthcare rights in Victoria

The Australian Charter of Healthcare Rights describes the rights of patients and other people using the Australian healthcare system. This summary outlines what this charter means if you are seeking or receiving care from a Victorian healthcare service. It tells you what you can expect from services, and what to do if you have a question or concern.

Access

You have a right to the health care you need, regardless of your ability to pay, or whether you have private insurance. There are a wide range of healthcare services in Victoria. Getting the care you need may mean referral to a different service than the one you first visited.

Safety

You have a right to safe, high quality care. Please tell staff if you have a concern about safety, or think a mistake has been made. Your right to safe, high quality care relies on open, clear communication. This means you giving your healthcare provider the information they need to treat you, and them telling you what you need to know to make decisions about your care.

Respect

You have a right to be treated with respect, dignity and consideration. Healthcare services should ensure that you are safe, clean and comfortable, and as far as possible, should provide care in surroundings that allow personal privacy.

You have a right to be treated in a way that is responsive to your culture and beliefs. This may include beliefs and practices around birth, illness and death, the gender of the person treating you, or your dietary requirements. You have a right to be treated without discrimination based on your race, age, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, carer status, disability, marital status or religious belief.

Communication

You have a right to clear, understandable information – and to ask questions – about your condition, treatment options, expected outcomes, side effects and costs. You have a right to seek a second medical opinion.

It is important that you give your healthcare provider relevant information, for example about your medical history or other medicines you may be taking, so they can give you the best possible care. You have a right to involve a family member, carer or chosen support person to assist you in discussions with healthcare service staff.

If you are using a government-funded healthcare service, you have the right to an accredited interpreter at important points during your care.

Participation

You have a right to take an active role in your health care, and to participate in decisions about your treatment. You have the right to refuse treatment, although there are some circumstances in which you may be regarded as unable to give informed consent or refuse treatment.

You have a right to have your family and other carers involved in your care, and to appoint someone to make medical decisions for you, if you lose the capacity to do so.

You have a right to participate in the planning, design and evaluation of healthcare services. You can share your ideas and experiences by talking to staff, writing letters, filling in surveys or joining a community advisory committee.

Privacy

Laws protect the privacy of your information. Sometimes your healthcare provider needs to share information with others involved in your care. Everyone involved is legally required to keep your information confidential.

You have a right to a say in what happens to your personal health information. You can restrict access to your healthcare record, but it may affect your healthcare provider's ability to give you the best possible care.

You have a right to see your healthcare record. Please tell your healthcare provider if any information is incorrect or incomplete. In some cases, you may be given only part of your record. If so, you have the right to apply under Freedom of Information laws for your complete record.

Comment

You have a right to give positive or negative feedback, ask questions and make complaints about your care. Your healthcare provider should resolve your concerns openly and fairly.

It is always best to try to resolve concerns with your healthcare provider first. If you are a hospital patient, and are unsatisfied with your doctor or treatment team's response, you have a right to speak to the hospital's patient representative.

If you are not satisfied with how your healthcare service or patient representative is responding to your concerns, you have a right to complain to the Victorian Health Services Commissioner. Details about a range of other complaints, support and advocacy organisations are also available.

More information

Visit www.patientcharter.health.vic.gov.au to learn more about how the Charter works in Victoria. You can also contact the Health Services Commissioner by visiting www.health.vic.gov.au/hsc or by Freecall 1800 136 066.