

Your Roles and Responsibilities in Providing an Accessible and Inclusive Service

This fact sheet is designed for everyone working in the healthcare sector. Healthcare service providers and their staff have a legal, ethical and professional responsibility to provide accessible and inclusive services for Women with Disabilities (WWD).

This resource has been created to start the conversation about how you and your workforce can provide accessible and inclusive services for WWD. Below, we have highlighted key areas to consider when implementing a review of your service/s.

1. Accessibility is everyone's responsibility

– it is not confined to one particular role or organisation:

- This includes everyone who is involved in the healthcare sector, from administration staff, support workers, medical staff, allied health professionals and others.
- A positive healthcare experience can start with administration staff. A welcoming, accessible environment is essential in creating an atmosphere of inclusion.
- An understanding of your legal, ethical and professional responsibility can help you to provide accessible and inclusive services for WWD.
- Each service has a responsibility to be accessible. Service providers should be familiar with [laws](#) and [legislations](#) such as physical access requirements and disability action plans.

2. Facilitate independent access to healthcare

– WWD have the right to independently access all parts of your services and facilities:

- Relying on external or informal supports is not considered accessible, unless this is a WWD's preference.
- Communicate messages in a tailored and accessible way for each client.
- Support and facilitate all health provision needs including external communication to other health providers.
- Routinely ask if clients are having trouble accessing any services or facilities and provide solutions.
- Work to empower WWD in their care, recognising that views of WWD and their carers may be different.

3. Proactively reflect on and provide accessibility:

- Consulting women about service provision is important and will ensure your accessibility provisions meet WWDs' needs.
- Proactively support and communicate the many aspects of accessibility, recognising that accessibility needs differ for each individual.
- Support WWD to become more proactive in their own healthcare. This may include identifying and supporting WWD who face complex and multiple barriers to engaging in healthcare. Encourage each WWD to express their values, needs, concerns and goals.

4. Systemic inclusion – listen to the voices of WWD:

- Ensure your service has an active [disability action plan](#) which has been constructed using expert lived experience, meets clients' needs and is upheld by resources and accountability measures.
- Prioritise ongoing provision of broad accessibility needs including:
 - Auslan interpreters,
 - interpreters for non-English speaking clients,
 - information in appropriate accessible formats,
 - physical access,
 - temperature control,
 - flexible seating options and more.
- Promote the involvement of WWD in organisational governance, leadership and/or remunerated consultancy. This ensures WWD are central to organisational planning and delivery of accessibility and demonstrates commitment to inclusion.
- Work together with other health care professionals to build best practice in accessibility and inclusion.
- Consider peer support or mentorship for improving your practice with WWD.



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...the person-centred approach, I think that's a big part of good quality healthcare, not bits and pieces of that person, but the whole person. Looking at their home life, looking at them being able to go back to work, having the right supports when they go home, having the right people to speak to. So it's very much the holistic, person-centred approach that I see is the key to good healthcare.

– Leesa

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The development of this resource was supported by the Australian Government Department of Social Services. Go to www.dss.gov.au for more information.

The Australian Government Department of Social Services funding is gratefully acknowledged.

Women with Disabilities Victoria would also like to acknowledge the ongoing support from our partner organisations – Multicultural Centre for Women's Health, Women's Health Loddon Mallee and Women's Health in the North as well as members of the Project Advisory Group.

Our particular thanks to Women with Disabilities Victoria's twelve Health Experts, who contributed their expertise to this resource as part of our co-design process.

This resource was prepared by Women with Disabilities Victoria.

Published by Women with Disabilities Victoria:
Level 9/255 Bourke Street, Melbourne, Victoria 3000

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