

Court Integrated Services Program (CISP) Pilot factsheet



Background

The Court Integrated Services Program (CISP) offers a coordinated team-based approach to the assessment and treatment of accused persons. CISP was established in November 2006 at Melbourne, Sunshine and Latrobe Valley Magistrates' Courts. CISP has since expanded to all headquarter and regional Magistrates' Courts in Victoria.

CISP focuses on proactive ways to address underlying causes of offending behaviour and provides case management support and links program participants to support services such as:

- drug and alcohol treatment services
- crisis and supported accommodation
- disability services
- mental health services
- acquired brain injury services.

Accused persons are required to undergo a formal risk assessment and screening process before being accepted into the program. If accepted, they are engaged with a CISP case manager who coordinates their treatment, provides regular case management, reviews their progress and provides updates (via written reports) to the judiciary.

Historically, CISP has only been available at the Magistrates' Court of Victoria (MCV), however the County Court of Victoria (CCV) CISP Pilot will improve access to CISP for those accused of offences in the indictable crime stream, regardless of when they apply for bail and from January 2021 will also make CISP services available for those seeking bail or deferral of sentencing within the County Court

CCV CISP Pilot

Key Features.

1. From 11 November 2020, the Court Integrated Services Program (CISP) will be enhanced for people in the Indictable Crime Stream at Melbourne Magistrates' Court.
2. This service will be available for people with matters listed in the Indictable Crime Stream at Melbourne Magistrates' Court regardless of when they apply for bail (e.g., application for bail prior to committal hearing or upon a person being committed for trial).
3. Case management will be provided by Advanced Case Managers with suitable training and expertise to work with the complexity of the cohort.
4. Case management will be available throughout the Magistrates' Court and County Court legal processes as required and will offer the ability to be exited and/or re-enter CISP if need or risk changes.

5. Ability to access County Court CISP upon bail application, bail variation and/or plea of guilty/deferral of sentence in the CCV (from January 2021).
6. Judicial CISP review hearings presided over by judicial officers in the jurisdiction in which the matter is listed at a particular time.
7. The CCV CISP stream of services will feature onsite drug and alcohol counselling services.

What does this mean?

1. The CISP pilot will offer case management for an extended period depending on an individual's level of need and risk. The period of CISP support/involvement may exceed the usual 3-4 months to support people over a longer period if required.
2. Intensity of CISP case management can increase or decrease depending on the specific needs of the individual over the course of the person's legal proceedings. There may be times when more intense case management and service support is required. It is also recognised that there could be periods of stability where less support is needed. The program will implement a risk and needs-based model that is flexible and responsive to the needs of the person.
3. Participants can be exited from CISP and CISP removed as a condition of bail by a judicial officer in the usual way for example if someone is not engaging or if needs/risks have been successfully dealt with and ongoing case management is not necessary. A person can also re-enter CISP and CISP added as a bail condition if circumstances change and additional support is required.
4. To ensure continuity of care and preserve therapeutic alliance the MCV Melbourne CISP team will continue to case manage a person throughout the County Court process, except for matters which have arisen in the County Court stream.

Eligibility

All referrals will be screened using an approved evidence-based screening assessment tool. The outcome of the process will be some assessment of risk of re-offending and information regarding support needs and treatment options. The process will be designed to be responsive and comprehensive to the needs of the participant and the Court.

In order to be eligible for CISP, accused persons must:

- not currently be sentenced to a parole or Community Corrections Order
- be eligible for bail or a relevant deferral of sentencing
- consent to be involved with CISP
- be experiencing one or more of the following:
 - mental health issues
 - disability, acquired brain injury or cognitive impairment
 - substance abuse issues
 - family violence
 - inadequate social, family and economic support that contributes to the frequency or severity of their offending
 - homelessness

- other relevant clinical support need.

Program Exclusions:

- people accused of sex offences are ineligible for CISP at the County Court
- if a person's support needs are so significant that they may reasonably be unable to comply with the program requirements, then a relevant recommendation will be made to the court around the most appropriate treatment and support pathway.

Please note: CISP does not provide legal advice or support to participants.

Program benefits

A three-year evaluation of CISP conducted by the University of Melbourne made a number of significant findings, including:

- a significant improvement to the physical and mental well-being of clients
- increased compliance with Community Correction Orders
- reduced risk of re-offending
- reduced harm to the community
- cost savings to the Government through reduced nights in prison for offenders and reduced re-offending.

Referral pathway

In order to make a referral, a CISP referral form must be completed and submitted to the relevant jurisdiction along with any relevant supporting documentation.

MCV:

- the referral form is available on the MCV website.
- to make a referral contact: indictablecisp@courts.vic.gov.au.

CCV:

- the referral form will be available on the CCV website from Jan 2021.
- to make a referral contact: CCVCISP@courts.vic.gov.au.

Mental Health Advice and Response Service (MHARS) at the County Court

MHARS seeks to improve mental health outcomes for people appearing before the court who may require mental health intervention by providing timely interventions while also reducing delays in court proceedings.

MHARS can assist the court with:

- providing relevant mental health information to the court, including past diagnosis and treatment history, Mental State Assessments or Mental Health Act 2014 education or advice

- providing timely advice on services and treatments to reduce delays in court proceedings
- linkages and referrals to mental health treatment providers for court users for early intervention.

MHARS also provide specialist clinical mental health advice to Judges, court services, correctional services, and court users to ensure appropriate mental health interventions and for people who are in custody.

Please note: the County Court MHARS program does not provide direct, ongoing treatment services.

Referral criteria

A MHARS referral can be made for anyone appearing in court or custody who:

- has a mental illness
- presents with behaviour that may be related to a mental illness.

To make a referral, please contact the Mental Health Advice and Response Service clinician at the County Court.

Email: mharscounty@forensicare.vic.gov.au.

County Court Contact

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