

Victim Financial Assistance Scheme (VAS) Information for Counsellors

Contact details for all VAS enquiries:

Email: counselling@victimsupport.org.nz

Postal: VAS Administrator, Victim Support, P O Box 3017, Wellington 6140

Phone: 0800 842 846

Victim Support has five counselling schemes. You must be approved and registered with Victim Support before we will refer clients to you for counselling.

Homicide Counselling (HC):

Available to: Whānau/family/close friends of victims of homicide.

Number of sessions: Maximum of 30 hours per person.

Death by a Criminal Act Counselling (DCC):

Available to: Whānau/family /close friends of victims killed by a criminal act.

Number of sessions: Maximum of 30 hours per person.

Serious Crime Emergency (SCE):

Available to: Victims of some serious crimes who are economically disadvantaged, hold a Community Services Card, and have exhausted all other avenues for counselling.

Number of sessions: This may vary and will be decided at the time of application.

Regulatory Offences: (RO):

Available to: Victims of serious regulatory offences who have been seriously injured.

Number of sessions: For whānau/family, close friends, present at the scene and witnesses of any prosecuted fatality up to 30 sessions; or

Counselling for primary victims and witnesses of any prosecuted serious injury up to 15 sessions.

Civil Defence Emergency Management Counselling (CDEM):

Available to: People affected by natural disasters.

Number of sessions: To be agreed at the time.

If you are contacted by a client, you think meets the criteria for Victim Support funded counselling, please encourage them to contact Victim Support directly. We will assess whether they meet the VAS criteria. Payment under the VAS scheme will not be made unless the client has been registered with us and approval has been granted for them to receive counselling.

From time to time, Victim Support provides contact details of approved counsellors to people who do not qualify for Victim Support funded counselling, but who indicate that they will pay for counselling themselves. If you do not wish us to give out your details, please advise us through the email address above.

Referral Process

When a client meets the criteria for funded counselling, they are given a list of Victim Support registered counsellors in their area to choose from.

If you are selected by a client as their preferred counsellor, the Victim Support Service Coordinator of the local office will contact you and let you know:

- the name of the client and the type of incident they were involved in
- the VAS Application Approval Number. This is unique to each client and application, and you will be asked to quote this number for invoice payment and other related reasons.
- The number of counselling hours that have been approved depending on the VAS grant accessed.
- If the client has already used up some of their hours by seeing another counsellor. These hours still count towards their overall hour allocation.

If you do not receive this information, then the client's application may not have been approved. Please contact Victim Support's National Office before commencing counselling. **No payment will be made for counselling that has not been approved.** The client will contact you to arrange the first appointment.

Victim Support cannot guarantee that you will receive referrals from our organisation. Referrals depend on factors such as if they (the client) select you as a counsellor or if there are any serious crimes in your area and clients in that area qualify for funding.

Joint Sessions

Clients are approved individually for counselling. If you believe a whānau/family session would be beneficial to the individual, then the session will be funded as part of that individual's therapy. There is no extra funding for whānau/family that attend a session.

If a one-hour joint session is held with two or more approved clients, please record the names of the attendees, and apportion the time between them.

If another whānau/family member requests counselling, they need to be registered with Victim Support and meet the VAS counselling criteria before counselling begins. If approved, you will be given a unique approval number for that new client. No payment will be made for any client that is not approved.

Did Not Attend/Late Cancellations

Please explain your cancellation policy to the client at the first session. If they do not show or make a late cancellation Victim Support will pay according to your cancellation policy. This fee will be deducted from the client's overall allocation. Please indicate on your invoice that it was a Did Not Attend (DNA)/Late Cancellation. Following a DNA/Late Cancellation please discuss future attendance of sessions with the client prior to making another appointment. If further DNAs/Late Cancellations continue we will reduce the amount that we will pay up to 50% of a normal session.

Please notify the VAS Administrator if a client has more than one DNA/Late Cancellation.

Please do not allow DNAs/Late Cancellations to continue, as this will impact on the number counselling sessions remaining.

Travel to Counselling Reimbursement

If a client needs to travel 16km return or more to attend counselling, they can apply for a *Travel to Counselling Reimbursement*. They are advised to contact their local Victim Support Office and will be given a form to complete. You will be asked to sign the form to verify attendance.

Invoicing

Please send a tax invoice **each month** to the email address above. These can be posted or emailed to the address shown at the top of this document. Include the VAS Application Approval Number (i.e.,

VA12345) with the session dates. If the charge is for a DNA/Late Cancellation, please make this clear on the invoice.

Using Counselling Sessions

When planning counselling sessions, please consider factors such as upcoming court hearings and the possible impact on the client. Extra funding is unlikely to be approved for this, so we ask that you plan your sessions around these events.

Fees

The approved counsellor will be paid the agreed rate for each approved session on invoice. The agreed rate is the counsellor's usual fee as indicated on the initial application form. The maximum hourly rate is currently set at \$170 plus GST.

Change of Details

If your details change, please contact the counselling@victimsupport.org.nz so we can update our database.

Complaints

If we receive a complaint about you from a client, we have referred to you we will advise you of the nature of the complaint and ask you to discuss it with us. We will make an internal decision about the complaint after hearing both sides and will advise you of the outcome. If we feel the complaint is upheld we may decide to remove you from our approved counsellor list.

If the complaint is such that we believe you have breached the code of ethics of the professional body you are affiliated with we will advise that association of the complaint and ask them to also investigate it. We also reserve the right to take further action as appropriate.

Please inform Victim Support if you are undergoing any disciplinary processes in relation to providing counselling or any change in your ability to provide safe and effective counselling. If a finding in relation to professional conduct or fitness to practice issue becomes a disciplinary matter and is upheld and/or made public by a professional association, we may liaise with that professional association regarding the course of action to take. We may decide to remove you from our counsellor approved list.

Annual Practising Certificates

A list of approved counsellors is made available to all Victim Support employees. To keep this list up to date approved counsellors are requested to send a copy of their practising certificate each year to the email address above.