



SUNSHINE CLINIC
PRIVATE HOSPITAL

GP Referral & Clinical Decision Support Guide for Mental Health



Private Inpatient Mental Health | Day Programs | Outpatient Psychiatry

Mental Health in General Practice

Mental health presentations are a routine and growing part of primary care. For many patients, this is the first point of contact and the anchor for ongoing care. As complexity increases, the clinical decision is often not whether to treat, but when to escalate beyond community-based management.



One in five Australians (16–85) experience a mental disorder in any 12-month period.

Australian Bureau of Statistics – National Study of Mental Health and Wellbeing (2020–2022)

Young people (16–24) have the highest 12-month prevalence, with almost two in five affected.



Australian Bureau of Statistics – National Study of Mental Health and Wellbeing (2020–2022)



Adult ADHD is estimated to affect 2–6% of Australians, with increasing recognition and demand for assessment and treatment.

Australian ADHD Professionals Association – Clinical Practice Guideline.

How this guide supports your practice



This referral guide is designed as a practical tool to support decision-making in primary care. It provides:

- Clear indicators for when inpatient stabilisation may be appropriate
- A checklist of baseline assessments and investigations
- Guidance on inpatient versus day program pathways
- A defined referral and admission process
- Information on insurance considerations, including mental health waiting period exemptions
- Assurance of structured communication and continuity back to general practice

The aim is to support timely, structured escalation when indicated, while maintaining strong GP involvement and continuity of care.



Clinical Advisory Service

Rapid GP-to-Psychiatrist Consultation.

(03) 7004 0068



Patient Admissions

Fast 24-28 hour triage.

intake@sunshineclinicph.com.au

GP Assessment and Baseline Investigations

Core Clinical Assessment



- Comprehensive psychiatric history
- Mental State Examination
- Suicide and self-harm risk assessment
- Substance use review
- Medication reconciliation
- Functional and social assessment
- Collateral information where appropriate

Common Baseline Investigations



- FBC, U&E, LFTs
- TFTs
- B12, folate, prolactin, iron studies
- HbA1c / fasting glucose / lipids
- CRP/ESR where indicated
- Urine drug screen when clinically appropriate
- ECG if initiating or adjusting QTc-impacting agents
- Pregnancy test where relevant

Screening tools such as PHQ-9, GAD-7, K10, MDQ and AUDIT-C may assist in documentation and monitoring.

Primary Care Escalation Framework

When to consider private inpatient referral

Consider inpatient stabilisation when there is:

- **Significant** functional deterioration
- **Escalating** depressive or anxiety symptoms
- Bipolar **instability** or diagnostic **uncertainty**
- **Emerging** psychotic symptoms not requiring involuntary care
- Medication **complexity** requiring close monitoring
- **Persistent** suicidality manageable in a private therapeutic setting
- **Failure** of outpatient interventions



Acute, involuntary presentations should follow public emergency pathways.



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Booking link



Do you have a patient whose presentation is escalating, unclear, or complex?

Sunshine Clinic psychiatrists are available to provide timely, collegial advice to support your decision-making. This service can assist with:

- Clarifying diagnostic uncertainty
- Medication optimisation advice
- Risk containment planning
- Determining suitability for inpatient admission
- Triage between outpatient, day program or inpatient pathways
- Guidance on private health eligibility and admission processes

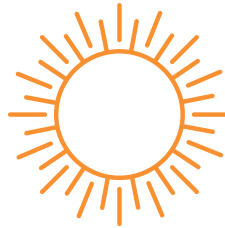
Our aim is not to replace primary care management, but to support it. Early specialist input can help prevent deterioration, reduce risk and streamline referral where appropriate.

Inpatient vs Day Program Triage



Inpatient admission may be appropriate when:

- Symptoms are escalating and **function is significantly impaired**
- Risk is present but manageable in a private, structured therapeutic environment
- Medication initiation/adjustment needs close monitoring
- Intensive daily therapy and containment are needed to manage deterioration
- There is a clear need for stabilisation and multidisciplinary review



Day program may be appropriate when:

- Patient does not require overnight admission but needs **more than weekly outpatient care**
- Post-discharge consolidation is needed
- Skills-based therapy and relapse prevention are priorities. Sunshine Clinic's day program includes group therapy blocks, maintenance therapy after discharge, skills-based modules (emotion regulation, relapse prevention), and evidence-based community treatment (e.g., depression, PTSD, personality disorders).



Sunshine Clinic offers structured inpatient programs and step-down day programs.

Patient Referral Pathway



Encourage patients to call their insurer to confirm eligibility and out-of-pocket costs.



Referral Process

- ✓ GP referral submitted to intake@sunshineclinicph.com.au
- ✓ Intake triage within 24-48 hours
- ✓ Insurance eligibility confirmed
- ✓ Admission scheduled
- ✓ GP notified



Include on the Referral

- Presenting symptoms, duration, severity, key precipitants
- Current risk status and protective factors
- Psychiatric history: diagnoses, admissions, response to treatments
- Current meds, recent changes, allergies/adverse reactions
- Relevant medical comorbidities and key recent results (pathology, ECG if relevant)
- Substance use summary
- Social context and supports; interpreter needs
- Reason for referral: inpatient stabilisation vs day program vs psychiatry clinic assessment
- Nominated family/carer contact (with consent)



PHI Waiting Period Exemption

Patients may be able to access inpatient psychiatric care sooner than they think. **The Australian Government outlines waiting periods and exemptions for private health insurance, including mental health provisions.**

The mental health waiting period exemption is commonly described as a **once-per-lifetime exemption, and eligibility depends on having already served an initial period of hospital cover and the insurer's rules.**



Private Mental Health Hospital in Melbourne's West

Sunshine Clinic Private Hospital in St Albans was purpose-built to deliver responsive, high-quality inpatient and outpatient mental health care without delay.

Co-designed with individuals who have lived experience, the environment and model of care were shaped to promote safety, dignity and active engagement in recovery.

With 24-48 hour referral triage, immediate psychiatrist availability and daily one-to-one medical review, our approach prioritises stabilisation and measurable progress. Integrated day programs, structured discharge pathways and consistent GP communication ensure care extends beyond admission and supports sustained recovery.



SUNSHINE CLINIC
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Why Choose Sunshine Clinic?

Access & Responsiveness

- Referral triage within 24–48 hours
- Beds and psychiatrists available
- Average inpatient stay approximately 3 weeks
- Private Health Insurance typically allows up to 28 days
- A once-per-lifetime mental health waiting period exemption may apply depending on insurer eligibility

Psychiatric Intensity

- Daily 1:1 psychiatrist review
- Collaborative psychiatrist team model with peer input built-in
- Flexibility to align patients with the most appropriate treating psychiatrist

Whole-Person Recovery Environment

- Purpose-built, newly established facility
- Patients may personalise rooms
- Family, friends and pets may visit
- Nutrition designed to support recovery
- Culturally diverse clinical team

Continuity & GP Communication

- Admission notification
- Clear documentation of medication changes
- Comprehensive discharge summary
- 7-day post-discharge follow-up call
- Step-down day program available
- Communication back to referring GP

Dynamic Therapeutic Programming

- Cohort-responsive group sessions run by psychiatrists and moulded to the current patient mix
- Programs informed by CBT, ACT, DBT and trauma-informed principles
- Senior psychiatric nursing team

Our Doctors



**A/Prof Mahesh Jayaram
Psychiatrist**

MBBS, DPM, MMedSc,
MRCPsych (UK), FRANZCP



**Dr Bharath Dabbadi
Umapathy
Psychiatrist**

MBBS, DPM, MD, MRCPsych
(UK), FRANZCP



**Dr Rajiv Siota
Psychiatrist**

MBBS, MMedSci (UK), CCT (UK),
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**Dr Minju Sajith
Psychiatrist
(Adult & Child)**

MBBS, DPM, MD, MRCPsych
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**Dr Avinash Waghmare
Psychiatrist**

MD, FRANZCP



**Dr Naveen Thomas
Psychiatrist**

MBBS, DPM, MD, DNB,
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**Dr Sashin Kumar
Psychiatrist**

MBBS, MPM, FRANZCP, AFRACMA



**Dr Alexandra (Sandy)
Waxmann
Psychiatrist**

BSc, MD, MP, FRANZCP

Psychiatry clinic referrals: consulting@sunshineclinicph.com.au

**Stay up to date with the latest in published
and peer-reviewed academic research from
your local Sunshine Clinic Private Hospital
psychiatrists**



Our Services & Specialties



Clinical Services



Outpatient Psychiatry Clinic

Book an outpatient appointment with one of our experienced psychiatrists.

[Learn More](#)



Inpatient Admissions

Specialised inpatient programs, evidence-based care, state-of-the-art facilities.

[Learn More](#)



Outpatient Day Programs

Our day programs are designed and delivered by leading psychiatrists.

[Learn More](#)



Repetitive Transcranial Magnetic Stimulation (rTMS) (Bulk Billed)

Non-invasive brain stimulation therapy for treatment-resistant depression and mood disorders.

[Learn More](#)

Expertise across multiple conditions



Mood Disorders



Psychotic Illness Without Acute Risk Issues



Anxiety & Panic Disorders



Trauma-Related Presentations & PTSD



Emerging or Stabilised Personality Disorders



Substance Abuse (mild-moderate)



Adjustment Disorders



Older Adults with Stable Cognitive Functioning



Veterans & Emergency Service Workers

Alignment with Victorian Legislative Principles



Sunshine Clinic's model aligns with the Mental Health and Wellbeing Act principles:

- Recovery-oriented practice
- Least restrictive care
- Culturally responsive and inclusive
- Recognition of family and carer roles



SUNSHINE CLINIC
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Access the latest education,
research and
referral resources



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P (03) 7004 0068 F (03) 8672 3143

www.sunshineclinicph.com.au

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