

# Victims Assistance Unit

## Guideline 1

### Granting Financial Assistance for Counselling Expenses

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This guideline is issued pursuant to section 131 of the *Victims of Crime Assistance Act 2009* (the Act) for Government assessors on the exercise of their powers in assessing claims for financial assistance. Nothing in this guideline supersedes or overrides the requirements of the legislation.

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#### Making a Grant of Financial Assistance for Counselling Expenses

1. An assessor should be confident that any grant of assistance will assist the applicant's recovery from their injuries.
2. Information from the applicant's health practitioner (defined in Schedule 3 of the Act, including a registered medical practitioner and registered psychologist) may be used as a basis for deciding financial assistance for counselling services.
3. Where necessary, an assessor should require the applicant to undergo an examination (see section 73 of the Act) by a health practitioner nominated by the assessor. The purpose of the examination is for the health practitioner to provide a report to the assessor, which may include a report on counselling required by the applicant.
4. Reimbursement for medical reports is dependent on a grant of assistance. An assessor needs to take every step to ensure, as far as practicable, a health practitioner is not requested to provide a report if it is unlikely that a grant of assistance will be made in relation to the application.

#### Qualifications and Requirements for Counselling Services

5. Victim Assist Queensland supports an applicant's ability to choose a preferred counsellor and receive financial assistance as per the published Victim Assist Queensland Table of Costs, where the counsellor has the appropriate qualifications.
6. Appropriate qualifications include registration under the *Health Practitioner Regulation National Law Act 2009* or being an Accredited Mental Health Social Worker accredited by the Australian Association of Social Workers, or membership of the Australian Association of Social Workers with demonstrated relevant experience.

7. The relevant counsellor must also maintain an appropriate level of professional and public liability insurance for a grant of financial assistance to be made to an applicant.

### **Government Funded Services**

8. An assessor must not approve payment for counselling services which are provided under an existing funding arrangement free of charge to victims of crime.
9. The Queensland Government, through the Victim Services Funding Program, funds services to provide counselling free of charge to victims of crime. Any client who requests counselling should be referred for immediate assistance to help them to recover from their injuries. This referral can be done at anytime and without reference to an application for financial assistance.

### **Requests for Amendments to Grants of Assistance**

10. An applicant may apply for an amendment to a grant of assistance for counselling services in accordance with the Act to enable them to see an alternative counsellor.
11. An applicant may apply for an amendment to a grant of assistance in accordance with the Act requesting additional counselling.
12. In each of these circumstances an assessor may require the applicant to undergo an examination (see section 73 of the Act) by a health practitioner nominated by the assessor. The purpose of the examination is for the health practitioner to provide a report to the assessor, which may include a report on counselling required by the applicant.

### **Complaints Regarding Counselling Services**

13. Victim Assist Queensland is not responsible for the quality of service provided by individual practitioners.
14. All complaints received regarding counselling provided as part of a grant of assistance must be recorded and referred to the appropriate registration body for action and response.

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