



# Client Information Booklet



## Client Information

# Gold Coast Centre Against Sexual Violence

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## Facts and statistics

- Sexual violence can happen to anyone. Statistics show that most victims are female and most offenders are male (93%; ABS – Recorded Crime, Offenders, 2013-14)
- 1 in 6 adult women have experienced physical and/or sexual violence before the age of 15 (ABS, 2017)
- 1 in 5 adult women have experienced an incident of sexual violence since the age of 15 (ABS, 2017)
- Intimate partner violence is the greatest health risk factor for women aged 25-44
- Since the age of 15, 1 in 6 women have experienced physical and/or sexual violence by an intimate partner and 1 in 4 have experienced emotional abuse by an intimate partner (ABS, 2017)
- 53% of women report having experienced sexual harassment in their lifetime (ABS, 2017)
- 1 in 6 women report having experienced an incident of stalking since the age of 15 (ABS, 2017)
- The women most at risk of domestic, family and sexual violence are young women, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, pregnant women, women with disabilities, women experiencing financial hardships and women who experienced or witnessed domestic violence as children (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2018).
- Most people are sexually assaulted by someone they know and trust. 19% of reported incidents of sexual violence against women are perpetrated by a current partner (ABS, 2006) and strangers only account for 15% of offenders (AIC, 2013).
- 50% of reported sexual assaults take place in the home of the victim or the offender (ABS, 2012)
- Just over one third (39%) of all persons who experienced sexual assault had their most recent incident reported to police (ABS, Crime Victimization 2016-17)
- Approximately 1 in 10 reported cases of sexual assault result in a conviction (AIC, 2007)

## Introduction to the Gold Coast Centre Against Sexual Violence

The Gold Coast Centre Against Sexual Violence Inc. (GCCASV) began in 1990 as a community based, community managed organisation. It is currently funded by the Queensland Government Department of Child Safety, Youth and Women, and covers the geographical area from Coolangatta to Coomera. GCCASV provides trauma-informed short and long term counselling and support to female survivors of sexual violence. More recently, via additional funding for the Women's Health and Wellbeing Program, GCCASV also provides long term counselling and support to female survivors of domestic, family and other forms of gender based violence who are post-crisis and beyond the violence.

GCCASV is a free and confidential specialist service. We provide a safe, supportive, woman-centred environment in which survivors can become aware of their own strengths and gain confidence and control of their lives. Qualified and experienced professional workers are employed from a variety of backgrounds including psychology, social work, counselling and social/behavioural science.

### Contact details

Address	179-181 Scarborough St, Southport
Phone	+61 7 5591 1164
Fax	+61 7 5591 1173
Email	<a href="mailto:admin@stopsexualviolence.com">admin@stopsexualviolence.com</a>
PO Box	1924, Southport QLD 4215
Website	<a href="http://www.stopsexualviolence.com">www.stopsexualviolence.com</a>

Hours of operation    GGCASV is open 9 am. to 5.00 pm. Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday and 9am to 7.30pm Wednesday. Appointments outside of these hours are negotiable.

### Access

#### Children

It is recognised that some women attending the service may have limited childcare options and will need to bring their children with them. Unfortunately, there is no childcare available

at the service. There are toys and a TV in the waiting room and children are welcome to wait here during counselling sessions. However, children remain the mother's responsibility and counselling may be interrupted to attend to their needs. Alternatively, a larger counselling room ("the family room") can be utilised if children are present, however consideration needs to be taken regarding what is discussed in counselling in the presence of children.

### Interpreters

GCCASV will organise interpreters by phone or on site to aid access for those from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds and those who identify as deaf or hearing impaired.

### Access for those with physical ability concerns

GCCASV premises are designed to support accessibility for all women. The premise facilities include accessible parking, ramps, lifts, toilets and counselling rooms.

### Assistance animals

GCCASV recognises the role that assistance animals can play in decreasing barriers to access and facilitating participation of people with disability in accessing various aspects of personal and public life.

GCCASV welcomes accredited and trained support animals (e.g. guide dogs, emotional support animals) as per the [\*Disability Discrimination Act 1992\*](#), however due to Occupational, Health and Safety policies are unable to accommodate other animals in the building.

### Males attending the service

Although GCCASV is a women's centre, we appreciate that some women may wish to have a male support person accompany them to appointments. If we are notified in advance that a client wishes to be supported by a male, we can make appropriate arrangements to ensure everyone's comfort and safety.

### Cost

There is no cost involved in counselling or support from GCCASV.

### Accessing via public transport

A number of services stop at the bus stop on Norman St, Southport, which is a short walk to the centre. There are also a number of bus stops along Scarborough St, Southport, including the Southport Transit

Centre and Australia Fair, which are within walking distance. The Southport station on the G-link route is also within walking distance for those using the tram.

## Services provided

### To victims and survivors of recent and/or past sexual violence

- Crisis support
- Short- and long-term individual counselling
- Information regarding sexual violence, its impacts and options following victimisation (including legal and medical)
- Practical support through related legal procedures, including assistance with reporting to police and support throughout the court process, as well as wider advocacy in the context of other systems (e.g. Victims Assist QLD, housing, mental health)
- Therapeutic and educational groups

### To friends and family

- Information and short-term support to partners, friends and relatives of women who have experienced sexual violence
- Information and short-term support to parents of children (male and female) who have experienced sexual violence, or where it is/has been suspected

### To survivors of domestic and other gender-based violence

- Post-crisis therapeutic individual counselling
- Advocacy and support, including facilitation of access to other services
- Access to therapeutic and educational groups

### To the general community

- Development and dissemination of resources and information
- Information on legal and medical issues relating to sexual violence
- Public education campaigns
- Presentations to students and the general community
- Training to other professionals

## Referral process

GCCASV offer two support programs, each with their own eligibility criteria.

### Eligibility criteria for the sexual violence program

- Identify as female
- 15 years or over
- Resides or temporarily resides on the Gold Coast
- Has experienced sexual violence at any time in her life, **OR**
- Non-offending parents of children (male and female) who have experienced sexual violence at any time in their life, or where it is/has been suspected
- Non-offending partners, friends and relatives of women who have experienced sexual violence at any time in their life

### Eligibility criteria for the women's health and wellbeing program

- Identify as female
- 15 years or over
- Resides or temporarily resides on the Gold Coast
- Post-crisis in terms of victimisation
- Physically and emotionally safe and stable
- In secure and safe housing
- No current breaches (of Domestic Violence Order or bail)
- Ready to engage in therapeutic counselling

Individuals can self-refer by contacting the service and organising an initial appointment. Assisted referral pathways are in place with the Police and local Hospitals and an assisted referral form is available for other service providers to refer women into the Women's Health and Wellbeing Program. There is a very brief intake process that takes place over the phone and an appointment is booked at the earliest mutually convenient time.



## Introduction to counselling

### What is counselling at GCCASV like?

Counselling at GCCASV is about how you are feeling and the effects of your experience of violence on your life. In your initial counselling session, you will have the opportunity to discuss your support needs and counselling goals and will be provided with information regarding the support and therapy that can be offered. This discussion will continue and evolve throughout your counselling journey.

Counselling at GCCASV is underpinned by a feminist framework, is strengths based and holistic in nature meaning that you will be related to as the expert in your own life and have ultimate control over the direction, content and focus of the support you receive. You have the right to decide what you talk about and how much you share. The counselling will take into account your history, present circumstances and future aspirations and will focus on how you are feeling and the impact of the experience/s of violence on your life. The support offered is always trauma-informed and evidence based; it is delivered by qualified professionals with a tertiary degree in counselling, social work, social/behavioural sciences, or psychology.

Your counsellor will gather information to collaborate with you in formulating a counselling plan to meet your needs. This will be reviewed regularly and updated as needed to ensure that it continues to be reflective of your personal situation and support requirements.

You have the right to ask questions, request further information and change your mind at any time during your counselling journey.

You have the right to change counsellors should you desire. Please speak with your current counsellor and/or the Counselling Manager if you have any questions or requests relating to this.

### Responsibilities of the counsellor

GCCASV provides a professional counselling service. Counsellors have an eclectic and client-centred approach, which means we acknowledge that there are a variety of interventions and different ones will work for different women. We operate within a holistic, strengths based and feminist framework, which means we always:

- Focus on your needs

- Work with you at your pace to explore thoughts and feelings
- Provide a safe space to consider issues
- Respect individual coping strategies and help to find strategies not used before
- Provide choices and options when exploring any difficulties being experienced
- Help you to gain control in your life
- Acknowledge power imbalances within society
- Acknowledge the context in which gender-based violence (including sexual, family and domestic violence) occurs

### Survivors Bill of Rights

As a survivor of gender-based violence (including sexual, family and domestic violence), it is acknowledged that you have the right to deal with your own life, in your own way, at your own pace. You have the right to:

- Be believed
- Be treated with respect and dignity
- Have a safe counselling environment
- Be accompanied by a support person
- Privacy and confidentiality
- Ask questions
- Receive accurate and relevant information
- Seek and receive high-quality, empowering support
- Have culture, ethnic background, beliefs and sexuality respected
- Have the autonomy to make and change decisions
- Request a change in counsellor
- Make a complaint if not satisfied with the service
- Decide whether or not to proceed with legal action
- Heal

## Client Responsibilities

- To be considerate of the rights of others using the service – especially their right to confidentiality
- To be respectful to GCCASV staff members
- To let us know if our information or explanation has been difficult to understand
- To let us know with as much notices as possible if you are unable to keep an appointment
- To let us know of any special needs, e.g. needing to bring children to the service, having specific access requirements, or needing an interpreter etc.
- To attend appointments without being under the influence of alcohol or illicit drugs

## Non-attendance and rescheduled appointments

Engaging in counselling requires a commitment to attend scheduled appointments. If one scheduled appointment is missed, the service will make contact with you to check that everything is OK and to determine whether you would like another appointment. If several appointments are missed without contact being made, it will be assumed that you are not yet ready to engage in counselling and that you may recontact at a later date.

From time to time, the service may need to reschedule one of your appointments (e.g. if the counsellor is away sick or is attending to a crisis). The appointment will be rescheduled for the earliest mutually suitable time.

## Privacy, Confidentiality and Client Records

### Privacy

GCCASV is bound by the [Commonwealth Privacy Act \(1988\)](#). Information is routinely collected regarding service users who access GCCASV. De-identified information is routinely provided to GCCASV's funding body to monitor and ensure service users are receiving quality care.

With your permission, as part of the delivery of counselling support, information relevant to your personal situation and counselling will be collected and recorded. You have the right to request that no information be recorded; in such instances, a record of attendance and basic demographic and contact information only will be recorded. You have the right to change your mind regarding record-keeping at any time.

If you provide consent for records to be kept, the information collected is kept securely and, in the interests of your privacy, used only in the delivery of your care by those authorized to access it. Your personal information is retained securely online using our current practice software (Halaxy) to document what happens during sessions and will enable GCCASV to provide relevant and informed counselling. At any stage you are entitled to access and amend your personal information kept on file. Different possible forms of access can be discussed.

As per the [Privacy Amendment \(Notifiable Data Breaches\) Act 2017](#) you, along with the Office of the Australian Information Commissioner, will be notified in the instance of any data breach involving your personal information that is likely to result in serious harm.

### Confidentiality

GCCASV works under a principle of *limited confidentiality*. This means that all of your information will be kept private and confidential, unless the following circumstances arise:

- You provide written consent to exchange information with another person (e.g. family member, another service provider) that is involved in your support or care.
- Where there is danger to a child suspected, observed, or disclosed. In this instance protective action will be taken in line with our Child Protection Risk Management Strategy.
- If there is a disclosure of risk of harm to yourself or another person, the service will take appropriate action based on our duty of care.
- If an employee is made aware of details of a serious crime that has been committed or is about to be committed (e.g. murder, assault, robbery), workers are obliged to report such information to the police if they have reason to believe that the details disclosed are accurate;

- If the police produce a search warrant requesting client information, the service must co-operate, ([Police Powers and Responsibilities Act 2000](#) s.157 and s. 158). A search warrant must be produced by the police prior to access being permitted.

In the case of any of the above situations arising, GCCASV are committed to, where possible, discussing concerns and options with the client involved before any action is taken. If relevant, the client will be involved in the decision making and encouraged to take action herself.

### Communication with other service providers

You may want information shared with other service providers or support people. If this is the case, you will be asked to give permission in writing. Without your expressed permission, no information about your attendance at the service or the content of the counselling will be shared with anyone, unless an exception to confidentiality occurs (see above).

### Record keeping and data collection

De-identified general information is collected and collated by GCCASV for statistical purposes only. There are two reasons for this:

- In order for us to continually increase our understanding of gender-based violence and its impacts as well as monitor trends in service access;
- In order for us to fulfil requirements of our funding and to ensure ongoing funding. The funding body requires de-identified data in order to monitor service access and outcomes, which is submitted on a quarterly basis.

You have the right to decide whether or not client records are kept in the context of your counselling. You will be asked to provide your consent or non-consent in writing denoting your decision.

If you opt to provide non-consent to keep client records, only contact information and details of attendance (day, time, session number) will be kept. The agency may use your contact information to contact you to make appointments, return contact made by you and inform you about groups, programs and events.

If you provide consent to keep records, brief clinical notes will be made documenting your contact with GCCASV. These will contain a brief summary of issues discussed, information

provided and interventions carried out, safety planning (if applicable) and any agreements you have made about correspondence between GCCASV and third parties.

Client records are kept securely online with access only granted to appropriate staff members.

You have the right to change your mind and withdraw any previous arrangements made in regard to the collection or disclosure of personal information. Please inform us in writing if you have any questions, would like further information about confidentiality and record keeping or if you change your mind regarding your decision in this context.

### Access to records

You have the right to access your own client records. There are two ways in which you can do this:

- You can view your client records during business hours in the presence of a counsellor.
- You can request a copy of your client record to be provided to you or a third party (original records are retained by the service). You will be required to complete a Release of Client Record form prior to a copy being made available detailing who you are consenting to receive the copy of your records and how this will be passed on (collected in person or scanned and emailed). A Receipt of Client Records form is to be completed and returned to GCCASV once the record has been received.

## Feedback and complaints

We endeavour to provide a professional, high quality, and effective service. We welcome feedback from you about your experience of our service. Feedback is valuable as it gives us the opportunity to monitor, review and plan future services.

### Satisfied with our service

If you are happy with our service, please let us know. You can fill out a Compliments, Comments and Complaints form and utilise the suggestions box in the waiting room.

Alternatively, you can give feedback directly to a worker face to face, over the phone or in writing via email/letter.

## Dissatisfied with our service

If you are not happy with our service, you have the right to voice your concerns and have the matter dealt with accordingly. Complaints can be made:



Via the Compliments, Comments and Complaints forms, which can be placed in the suggestion box in the client waiting room. These will be acted upon as far as information provided will allow.



Directly to the staff member involved (face to face or in writing via email/letter)



To the Counselling Manager or Director (5561 1194 or in writing via [email](mailto:feedback@csyw.qld.gov.au)/letter P.O. Box 1924, Southport QLD 4215)



To the President of the Management Committee (in writing via letter), P.O. Box 1924, Southport QLD 4215

The complaint will be assessed and appropriate action taken. If you have made a complaint you will be kept informed of the action being taken and the outcomes.

If dissatisfied with the outcome of a complaint, you may call, email, or write to our funding body to voice concerns:



1800 080 464 (free call)



[feedback@csyw.qld.gov.au](mailto:feedback@csyw.qld.gov.au)



Complaints Unit, Department of Child Safety, Youth and Women, Locked Bag 3405, Brisbane Qld 4001

Please note that the organisation does not discontinue or reduce services or take any recriminatory action in relation to a person who has made a complaint.

## Taking Care of Yourself

### Self-care

It is important that you take good care of yourself, especially following an experience of violence and while engaging in counselling. Some suggestions for self-care include:

- Check in with yourself often, ask yourself “what do I need right now?”
- Engage in regular light exercise (e.g. walk, swim, stretch)
- Make and eat a nutritious meal
- Spend time outside in nature
- Journal or write poetry
- Have a relaxing bath or shower
- Practice mindfulness using your breath and/or senses (e.g. observe your breath as it enters and leaves your nostrils, pay attention to the rise and fall of your tummy, name 5 things you can see/hear/smell/touch)
- Paint, draw or colour in
- Make yourself a cup of tea or hot chocolate and sip it mindfully
- Use inspirational quotes or affirmations to work on your mindset
- Name 3 things you are grateful for right here in this moment
- Spend time with an animal
- Give yourself a gentle hand massage
- Listen to music
- Learn about a new topic that interests you
- Start a nourishing morning and/or evening routine
- Be mindful of what you are consuming (food, drink, information, media) and the impact it has on how you feel
- Make sleep a priority and implement a gentle sleep routine each night



## Personal Safety Plan

You may find it helpful to prepare a personal safety plan for times when you feel unsafe or feel uncomfortable emotions.

I will telephone the following for support:

Friend's name:

Family member's name

[24-hour National Sexual Assault Counselling](#): 1800 737 732

[Qld State-wide Sexual Assault Helpline](#): 1800 010 120 (8:00am - 11:30pm 7 days a week)

24/7 Lifeline Telephone Support Line 13 11 14

## Other Contacts

Counsellor's name:

Doctor's name and phone number

Other important numbers

Gold Coast Centre Against Sexual Violence publishes a newsletter to maintain contact with our centre. Follow this link to subscribe to [The Thriver](#).

## GCCASV and Covid-19

Covid-19 has affected the way people around the world live, access services and work. To comply with Queensland's COVID safe plans, and to support the safety of our clients, community, staff, and committee members, GCCASV has implemented a COVID safe plan. GCCASV continues to assess, monitor, review and respond to challenges posed by COVID-19.

### Adapting Access to Counselling During COVID-19

GCCASV's COVID-19 response includes actions and recommendations and requests your co-operation with these measures.

#### COVID safe register

GCCASV maintains a COVID safe register. All people attending the centre are required to complete COVID screening questions, and provide contact information. Contact information is stored securely and may be provided to the Queensland Government to enable contact tracing if we are advised of a COVID risk at the centre.

#### Stay home if you are sick

Clients, supporters and GCCASV staff are advised not to attend the centre if experiencing flu-like and associated symptoms. If you are experiencing symptoms, but otherwise feeling well, please contact the centre to arrange for a telephone or video-based counselling session.

If your counsellor is experiencing symptoms, but otherwise feeling well, you may be contacted to change your appointment to a telephone or video-based counselling session.

#### Hand hygiene and sanitising

GCCASV has implemented a sanitising regime across all parts of our venue. We have also implemented hand hygiene measures. Hand hygiene stations and Information about hand hygiene processes are provided across the venue.

### Social distancing

GCCASV has adopted social distancing processes. We have made changes to our counselling and waiting areas to support maintenance of 1.5m social distance between individuals. This includes changing some entry and exit procedures across our venue.

### Telephone and online counselling and privacy and confidentiality

Some additional considerations need to be made when participating in telephone and online counselling. We encourage you to consider the confidentiality of your location and to prepare a private space from which you can participate in counselling. Further, you are encouraged to consider the security of the devices and networks you use to access counselling.

Your counsellor may discuss location, device, and network safety during your session. If you have concerns about privacy and/or confidentiality while participating in online or telephone counselling, please discuss your concerns with your counsellor.