



Autism Assistance Program Counselling Service

Guide Dogs SA/NT is now offering a short-term; goal focussed counselling service to all Autism Assistance Program clients, their carers and their families.

The Guide Dogs SA/NT Counselling Services has officially been launch and we are now inviting referrals from Autism Assistance clients, their families and their carers.

Referrals can either be made by a referral from a Guide Dogs staff member, external health provider or from the client, carer or family member themselves.

Below is some more information on the service which may answer some of your or your family's questions.

What will the counselling sessions involve?

Sessions will involve short-term, early intervention, goal-focused counselling to support Autism Assistance clients, their families and their carers. The counsellor will utilise evidence based psychological strategies (Cognitive Behavioural Therapy and Solution Focussed Therapy), proven to be effective with a wide range of mental health concerns.

What credentials do the counsellors have?

Makella Holden has been working as a Registered Psychologist since 2004 and has worked for Guide Dogs SA/NT for over six years throughout her career. In addition she has worked as a behavioural therapist with children with Autism and their families for many years. She has completed her Certificate 2 and 3 (partial) Auslan and has a strong knowledge and understanding of working with and assisting people with disabilities and their families.

Mayanthi Dharmabandu has completed a Bachelor in Psychological Science and a Masters in Counselling and psychotherapy at the University of Adelaide. She has been working at Guide Dogs SA/NT since 2014. In addition she has worked with other organisations as a therapeutic children's worker and case support worker, managing issues around domestic violence, homelessness, loss and grief and family and relationship breakdown.

What are some examples of issues that a client may have that may require counselling?

Examples of issues that clients might be experiencing that may require counselling include spectrum disorder diagnosis acceptance and adjustment, problem solving, grief and loss, family functioning issues, relationship breakdown, adjustment disorder, depression and anxiety management and other situational mental health issues.



How long are the sessions and is there a maximum sessions allowed?

Session length is 45-60 minutes. (Initial Assessment is 60 min). All forms will be completed within session with the counsellor. The number of sessions is capped at six to eight session pending on client's needs.

Where will the counselling sessions take place?

All sessions will be provided at Guide Dogs SA/NT offices. Phone counselling is also available on an as needs basis (conditions apply).

Are there any types of clients or situations where the counselling service would not be appropriate?

The service currently excludes clients with chronic, long-term mental health conditions and diagnosis and clients in acute crisis or at risk of suicide. The service will not provide diagnosis reports, assessment reports, court reports or Work Cover claim reports.

How much will the counselling sessions cost?

Guide Dogs are a registered provider of counselling services within the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) and can offer support to clients, carers and families as part of the Autism Assistance Dog Program.

What about confidentiality?

All information in session will remain confidential (within limits) however it will be discussed initially and on an ongoing basis if any information can and will be discussed and or shared with clients GP/case manager/other health providers/ family members. A detailed consent form will reflect this.

Can interpreters be accessed if required?

Yes - interpreters will be provided free of charge to the client.

What about ongoing referral? Where will the client be referred to if they need more specialised support?

Clients will be referred on if not appropriate for the service or if ongoing or more specialised services are required. Clients will be referred back to their GP as part of the services protocol.

Who do I contact for more information or to make a referral to the Counselling Service?

Please contact the Client Liaison Officer on 1800 757 738.