

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS:

1. What are the Statewide Referral Criteria (SRC) and why are they being developed?

Health services often have different referral guidelines for specialist clinics, making it challenging for GPs to know the necessary referral requirements and suitability of access for their patients.

Statewide referral criteria provide clear guidance to referring clinicians about which patients will be seen in specialist clinics and what investigations are required to support safe and appropriate triage. Statewide referral criteria are shared by all Victorian hospitals, making referral clearer and more equitable.

2. Who decides the Statewide Referral Criteria?

The referral criteria are being developed by the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) with consultation through clinical review panels. The panel membership comprises of health service Heads of Unit or specialists from across Victoria, health service nursing and allied health clinicians, General Practitioners and GP Liaison Officers.

3. Are there statewide referral criteria for all conditions and specialties?

No. Currently, only six specialties have statewide specialist clinic referral criteria and the criteria only apply to **ADULT** specialist clinics. The specialties currently with statewide criteria include:

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|-------------|---------------------|
| 1. ENT | 4. Neurology |
| 2. Vascular | 5. Gynaecology |
| 3. Urology | 6. Gastroenterology |

Statewide referral criteria for an additional five specialties; Cardiology, Endocrinology, Rheumatology, Ophthalmology and Obstetrics, are expected to be released throughout 2020. However, not all conditions will have statewide referral criteria. Statewide referral criteria will only be developed for common conditions with extended specialist clinic waiting times and where there is strong evidence that the condition can be effectively managed in primary care.

4. What does this mean for me as a GP/referring clinician?

From 1 February 2020, selected conditions for Neurology, Gynaecology and Gastroenterology will be assessed against the statewide referral criteria. This follows on from the launch of ENT, Vascular and Urology statewide referral criteria from **1 November 2019**.

5. What happens if I do not use or follow the SRC?

A referral that does not meet the criteria, either because it does not meet the threshold or there is essential information missing, will be returned to the referrer. Referrers should receive a letter from the health service clearly stating why the referral has been declined.

6. When will the criteria be available and where can I find them?

This project is supported by the Victorian Government

The new statewide referral criteria, and related clinical and referral pathways, are now available across all Victorian HealthPathways websites (or equivalent). Alternatively, the SRC can be viewed on the official DHHS website at <https://src.health.vic.gov.au>

7. How can I get access HealthPathways?

You will need a login to access HealthPathways. Contact your local PHN to request a login or [visit vtpdna.org.au/carepathways-and-referral](http://vtpdna.org.au/carepathways-and-referral)

8. I want to refer my patient to a public specialist clinic, but my patient doesn't meet all the criteria and/or I can't organise the essential tests? What do I do?

The statewide referral criteria will not replace clinical judgement. Referrals may be accepted by health services under exceptional and/or urgent circumstances, despite the criteria not being met.

We suggest first reviewing HealthPathways to verify if there is anything more that can be done in your practice to manage your patient's condition. If you strongly believe that all treatment options have been exhausted and/or there are extenuating circumstances for a specialist clinic referral, refer your patient to the appropriate specialist clinic clearly documenting the reasons for the referral.

For additional support you may consider contacting the GP liaison unit at the health service you intend to make the referral to.

9. The criteria say to refer my patient, but I can safely manage them in my GP clinic? Do I have to refer them?

If you can safely manage your patient in the community and do not require specialist advice, you do **not** need to refer them to a public specialist clinic. The criteria provide guidance on what referrals will be accepted by all public hospitals not what **should** be referred to see a specialist.

10. My referral has been declined because the referral was incomplete. What do I do?

You will need to submit the entire referral again. Please ensure you include ALL the essential investigations and information as listed in the statewide referral criteria to prevent your referral being declined again.

11. My referral has been declined because I haven't tried certain conservative treatments. Where can I find information of what treatments I should be offering my patient?

Visit your local HealthPathways website. Clinical pathways have been developed for each of the presenting conditions with statewide referral criteria. Each pathway aligns with the criteria and will support GPs to prescribe the necessary treatments and investigations prior to specialist referral.

12. Can I provide feedback on the criteria?

Yes, visit the 'About' section on the official DHHS website (<https://src.health.vic.gov.au/about>) for details.

If you have a question that was not answered here and require additional support, please contact your local PHN for further assistance.