

PERSONAL ALERT VICTORIA

Information for clients and contacts

Personal Alert Victoria (PAV) is a personal monitoring and emergency response service. It is funded by the Victorian Government and provided free of charge to eligible frail, isolated older people and people with disabilities to help them keep living in their homes.

You will need an assessment for the PAV Service to see whether you are eligible. To be eligible for the service you must live alone or be alone for long periods, have fallen or be at risk of falls, or have a condition that puts you at risk of medical emergencies. If you are assessed as eligible there is a waiting period before a PAV unit becomes available.

The PAV Service includes emergency response and daily monitoring. Emergency response ensures that help is available when you call. Daily monitoring provides a well-being check. If you do not want daily monitoring then the PAV Service is not for you.

The service relies on nominated contacts - family members, friends or neighbours – who are willing to help. You will need three or four contacts who can assist you promptly (within about 30 minutes, or in rural locations, within a reasonable time).

How the PAV Service works

The PAV Service relies on four linked parts:

1. A **pendant** is worn around the neck or wrist. It has a button that, when pressed, sends a signal to the receiver unit. The receiver unit then automatically dials the PAV Service. The PAV pendant works within 50 metres of the receiver unit, on average. If you are someone who is 'always on the go' outside of your home, the PAV Service will not suit you.
2. The **receiver unit** sits next to your telephone and is plugged into the telephone line. It receives the signal from the pendant then automatically dials the PAV Service.
3. The **PAV Service** has trained staff to respond to your call for assistance - 24 hours a day, every day of the year.
4. Nominated contacts – family, friends and neighbours- who are willing to help.

What happens when I press the button on the pendant?

If you are unwell, or have fallen or need help and you press the button on the pendant, the PAV Service will contact you immediately to see why you called. PAV Service staff can speak with you, through the receiver unit, within a certain range, even if you cannot get to the phone.

Depending on the circumstances of your call, the PAV Service will:

- help or reassure you over the phone, or
- call one of your nominated contacts and ask them to check on you, or
- call emergency services.

You will need to make keys available to your nominated contacts so they can enter your home if you call for assistance.

Your daily monitoring call

The receiver unit has a daily call button that you must press once between 6.00am – 11.00am each day. The daily call lets the PAV Service know that you are all right. Making the daily call part of your morning routine will make it easier to remember – *get up, put the kettle on, press the daily call button.*

The daily monitoring call also checks that the equipment is working properly. You will have peace of mind knowing the unit is in good working order if ever you need to make an emergency call.

After 11.00am the PAV Service calls people who did not make their daily call to check on their welfare. Usually, all follow-up calls are made by early afternoon, depending on how many calls are required. If you miss making your daily call and the PAV Service is unable to contact you, your contacts will be notified and asked to check on you. If you are going away, it is very important that you tell the PAV Service and your nominated contacts before you go.

ELIGIBILITY, ASSESSMENT AND SERVICE INSTALLATION

Who is eligible for Personal Alert Victoria?

You must be assessed as eligible for the service. Generally people who require PAV have high support and health needs and are therefore already receiving or being considered for other services.

To be eligible for the PAV service you must meet the following criteria.

Mandatory criteria – you must meet ALL of these (1, 2 and 3):

1. You agree to daily monitoring.
2. You are capable of using and willing to wear the PAV pendant at all times.
3. You live alone OR are alone for most of the day or evening OR live with a person who would be unable to get to the phone in an emergency or is unable to use the phone.

Other criteria - you must meet two (2) of these (4, 5 and 6):

4. You have had at least one fall that needed medical attention in the previous six months, or be at risk of falls.
5. You suffer from a major medical or chronic condition that puts you at risk of medical emergencies or has some ongoing effect on your health or well-being.
6. You are taking six (6) or more different medications on a permanent basis that are prescribed by your doctor or medical specialist.

How am I assessed for PAV?

To be considered for PAV, you need to be assessed for eligibility by an assessment organisation. PAV assessment organisations are usually your local council, community health service, aged care assessment service, district nursing service and some publicly-funded community rehabilitation centres. This may change depending on where you live. However, health organisations and local governments work together to provide referrals where necessary and help point you in the right direction.

Your doctor may suggest PAV for you, but you still need to be assessed by an assessor from a PAV assessment organisation.

For more information about assessment, contact your local council's Aged and Disability program. Local councils are listed in the Business and Government White Pages under 'Your Government'.

What happens during an assessment?

The PAV assessment is part of a broader assessment looking at different services that may help you to live at home. The assessor will explain the PAV Service to you, ask questions about your medical history and ask you if you want the service.

The assessment is done in your home to gather information about your telephone, and the location of power points. This information is important for when the unit is installed. The home environment is also assessed to see if there are any dangers that may cause you to fall.

If you are assessed as eligible for the service, you will be asked to nominate three or four people to act as contacts to assist you if required.

Nominating contacts

The PAV Service relies on nominated contacts - *family, friends or neighbours* – being willing to help. Contacts must be able to assist you promptly if asked to respond to a call you have made to the PAV Service. Prompt response means within about 30 minutes from being asked by the PAV Service, or in rural locations within a reasonable time.

Assessors will ask you for the names and contact details of your nominated contacts. You will need to pass on the forms at the back of this book to your nominated contacts. These forms explain the service and the role and responsibilities of nominated contacts.

What if I don't have suitable contacts?

People without suitable contacts able to help quickly may be considered for a referral to the Home and Community Care (HACC) Response Service. The assessor will explain this service during the assessment.

What happens after the assessment?

If you are eligible for the service and agree to participate fully, including daily monitoring, your assessment record will be sent to the PAV Service. You will be placed on the waiting list in date order that your assessment was received. The only exception is eligible people aged 100 years and over. They go to the top of the waiting list. The PAV Service will contact you when they receive your assessment record and again when a unit becomes available.

How is the PAV equipment installed?

Once a unit becomes available, the PAV Service will arrange a suitable time to come to your home, install the unit and show you how to use it.

Re-assessment

Sometimes re-assessment is required because of changes to your needs or living situation, or the way you use the service.

Generally, if you receive PAV you will have high support and health needs and are likely to receive other services. Services are monitored to respond to changes in your health or functioning. Similarly, your continuing eligibility for PAV is monitored both by the assessment organisation and the PAV Service.

If, after re-assessment, you no longer meet the eligibility criteria, other services may be recommended, and the PAV Service may be cancelled.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What happens when the alarm is activated?

When the alarm is activated the PAV Service will call and try to speak with you and see what help is required. If necessary, they will:

- provide reassurance over the phone
- telephone your nominated contacts
- contact emergency services.

I don't speak English very well. Can I use the service?

Yes. The PAV Service uses interpreters and family contacts through the phone system when they are talking to you.

I have different communication needs. Can I use the service?

Yes. People who are deaf, hearing-impaired or have complex communication needs can use the service. Equipment can be modified to meet the needs of most people.

Is there a waiting period for the service?

Yes. There will be a waiting period until a unit becomes available.

How is the waiting list set up?

Only people with high support and health needs are on the waiting list. People go onto the waiting list on date order that their assessment record is received by the PAV Service. The only exception is people aged 100 years and over. They go to the top of the waiting list as a priority.

What if I want the service immediately and do not feel that I can wait?

As the waiting list only has people with high support and health needs listed, the fairest way to assign units is by date order that the assessment records are received by the PAV Service. For example, someone put onto the waiting list in May will get a unit before someone who is put on in June. If you feel that you are unable to wait, or you do not meet the PAV Service eligibility criteria, then you may decide to buy a private service in the meantime. You are encouraged to refer to the Yellow pages under 'Alerting Systems or Services' to select a provider.

What happens if I go away once I have the service?

If you go away you must let the PAV Service know, otherwise they may ask your nominated contacts to check why you have not made your daily call. Of course, if you are

more than 50 metres away from the PAV receiver unit you will not be covered by the service.

What happens if I move in with family – will the unit move with me?

If you have a unit and your circumstances change, like you move in with family, you may no longer be socially isolated and therefore may no longer be eligible for the service. The PAV Service will discuss your options with you.

If my circumstances change and I no longer need the unit can I give the pendant to someone else living in the house?

No. The pendant and unit have been assigned to you based on your support and health needs. If someone is living with you they will need to be assessed to see whether they are eligible for the service.

RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Client rights and responsibilities

If you have a PAV unit you have responsibilities (things you must do) and rights.

You have the responsibility to:

- be connected to a standard telephone service so that you can make and receive calls;
- be connected to mains electricity, or another reliable electricity source so that the unit receives power;
- treat PAV service staff and your nominated contacts or Home and Community Care (HACC) Response staff with courtesy and respect;
- provide a safe environment for staff and your nominated contacts;
- make keys available to your nominated contacts or the Home and Community Care (HACC) Response Service;
- look after the equipment;
- use the service properly. Using the service in the wrong way may show a change in your support and health needs. The possible need for a re-assessment will be discussed with you;
- call the PAV Service every day between 6.00am and 11.00am. Daily calls are required to ensure that you are all right. If you do not make a daily call, the PAV Service will telephone you, and if required ask your nominated contact to check on you;
- agree to a re-assessment if recommended. A re-assessment may lead to recommended additional services or may result in cancellation of this service;
- tell the PAV Service of a change in your circumstances, such as a change of address about to happen, an upcoming holiday, or if you enter hospital;
- return the equipment to the PAV Service when no longer needed. The equipment belongs to the Department of Human Services.

You have the right to:

- be treated with courtesy and respect;
- be assessed for services without discrimination;
- refuse a service without putting at risk future attempts to access the service;
- be informed and consulted about available services and other relevant matters;
- be involved in decisions about receiving PAV;
- make a complaint about the PAV Service or the Home and Community Care (HACC) Response Service;
- involve an advocate of your choice;
- receive good quality services;

- privacy and confidentiality, and access to all personal information kept about you, if requested. Your information is protected by law and is treated with the strictest confidence and stored securely.

Your nominated contacts – role, rights and responsibilities

Personal Alert Victoria relies on the co-operation of relatives, friends and neighbours to act as nominated contacts when a client calls for assistance. When someone agrees to act as a nominated contact, they have responsibilities and rights.

The role of the nominated contact is to be responsible for:

- carrying a set of the client's house keys or having access to a fitted key safe (if accessing a key safe the code must be kept confidential);
- going to the client's home, checking on the client promptly (about 30 minutes from notification by the PAV Service, or in rural locations within a reasonable time) and providing any necessary help;
 - telephoning emergency services on 000 if required;
 - securing the client's home if they are taken to hospital or elsewhere;
 - telephoning the PAV Service to inform them of the outcome, even if the client needs no further help;
- contacting the PAV Service if you are unable to act as a contact at any time, due to holidays or other reasons, or if you wish to discontinue the role; and
- respecting the privacy rights of the client at all times.

Some nominated contacts (usually family members) may also be responsible for:

- informing the PAV Service if there are changes in the client's circumstances, such as a future change of address, an upcoming holiday, or if the client enters hospital; and
- assisting the client to return the equipment to the PAV Service if no longer needed or if the client's circumstances change.

Nominated contacts have the right to:

- privacy and confidentiality. Your information is treated with the strictest confidence and stored securely;
- be treated with courtesy and respect;
- be informed about the PAV Service and other relevant matters;
- make a complaint about the PAV Service; and
- telephone the PAV Service if you need advice about your role.

OTHER SUGGESTIONS

Even if you are eligible for the PAV Service you may also be interested in arranging some extra support. The following suggestions may be useful.

- You may wish to arrange a daily telephone call with a family member, friend or neighbour. This may benefit both, especially if the other person also lives alone.
- Pre-program your telephone so you can quickly and easily dial family members with just the press of one button.
- Creating a telephone list of friends, neighbours and associates (maybe people from a club or group that you belong to or once belonged to) is a good idea. Each person

rings the next person on the list to check on each other and provide some social support.

- Speak to your telephone company about mobile and cordless telephones and intercom systems.
- Telecross is run by the Red Cross and operates across Australia. Telecross volunteers make a daily call to isolated people living in their own home who may be at risk of accident or illness. If the person cannot be contacted emergency procedures are activated. People must be cognitively able to participate to be eligible. For more information call 1800 246 850 or refer to www.redcross.org.au/vic/services and follow links to Telecross.
- Speak to trusted family, neighbours and friends about establishing some community watch activities. Developing a code to signal when assistance is required can be simple and effective. For example, raising the front room blinds during the day can be the code to show that you are well. Alternatively, uncollected newspapers and mail may show a need for assistance.
- Contact the Independent Living Centre on Telephone (03) 9362 6111. The Centre has a variety of daily living aids on display.

