

# Our values

Department of Human Services



## Introduction

The Department of Human Services' organisational values and behaviours were originally developed through a process of consultation and discussion extending over two years. This consultation involved the experience, ideas and commitment of many members of staff.

Since their introduction in 2001, the organisational values have been promoted through the department's performance management systems, recognition programs, recruitment activities and various communications.

Subsequent consultation and research over a number of years has indicated that the values are well understood and closely aligned with employees' own personal values<sup>1</sup>. They are frequently utilised and well integrated into a variety of processes across the department.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Employee Climate Survey 2005 and 2007

<sup>2</sup> *Integrating the Public Administration Act 2004 (PAA) values with the existing DHS values*, internal research report by Atkinson-Consulting, 2005.

## About this booklet

This booklet has been developed as an easy reference tool. It aims to demonstrate how the values support the department's mission and have relevance to our everyday working lives. Each value has a set of acceptable and unacceptable behaviours, which provide tangible examples to guide our actions and decisions.

This booklet can be provided to all new employees through corporate and local induction processes and referred to as a guide during the progression, performance and development process. It can also be used as an easy reference when making decisions about the way we work with our clients and each other.

## The department's mission

The Department of Human Services' mission statement broadly describes the services we provide to the Victorian community. It conveys to staff, clients and stakeholders what we are here to do. The department's mission is to enhance and protect the health and wellbeing of all Victorians, emphasising vulnerable groups and those in most need.

## The Victorian Public Sector values

You may notice some changes to the department's values since this booklet was last produced.

With the passing of the *Public Administration Act (2004)*, a standard set of Victoria Public Sector (VPS) values were enacted. These values underpin the VPS Code of Conduct, which reinforces the principles of behaviour expected of every public sector employee. The VPS values are:

Responsiveness

Integrity

Impartiality

Accountability

Respect

Leadership

Human rights

Under the Act, the department is required to promote the VPS values and ensure they are reflected in our own existing values.

As part of this process, extensive employee consultation was conducted in 2005/06 to explore the links between the VPS values and the departmental values, and to identify opportunities for alignment.

Based on the results of this consultation, the Department of Human Services executive team endorsed the following changes to the departmental values:

- amendment of the value ‘professional integrity’ to ‘professional integrity and respect’
- incorporation of behaviour statements from the VPS values that are not adequately reflected in the existing departmental values
- addition of two supporting statements emphasising the importance of leadership and service to government and the community
- an update of the visual representation of the consolidated values.

These changes are now reflected in this booklet.

## Our organisational values

Our department has five core values that are essential to creating the positive working environment we need to achieve the department's goals. These values describe the culture and norms staff agree they would like to see in the Department of Human Services.

The values articulate how we expect to be treated and how we treat others. They also convey to people outside the department what we stand for and how they will be treated as clients and colleagues.

The values help us to focus on how we conduct our business, rather than simply the result. They provide a framework for decisions and actions that ultimately affect the quality of service we deliver to the Victorian community.

## Behaviours

A range of behaviours – acceptable and unacceptable – have been identified to support the values. This booklet lists behaviours under each value, making it clear how Department of Human Services employees are expected to behave towards colleagues and clients.

## Our values

### Client focus

**We work towards improving the health and wellbeing of our clients and community.**

### Professional integrity and respect

**We act impartially, treating all people with dignity and respect.**

### Quality

**We always strive to do our best and improve the way we work.**

### Collaborative relationships

**We work together to achieve better results.**

### Responsibility

**We commit to the actions we take to achieve the best possible outcomes for our clients.**

Themes that underpin these values are:

- leadership
- we serve the government and community.

## Value: client focus

includes individuals, families, populations, service providers and staff

*We work towards improving the health and wellbeing of our clients and community.*

Acceptable behaviours include:

- empathising with clients (trying to understand their perspective)
- responding promptly to client needs
- seeking information to fully understand client concerns
- confirming understanding of the problem with the client
- keeping clients informed of progress or delays
- seeking assistance to deliver on commitments
- making every effort to maximise positive client outcomes.

Unacceptable behaviours include:

- providing the minimum level of service that clients will tolerate
- failing to follow up client enquiries
- treating service delivery as a low priority
- failing to consider the likely impact on clients or other parts of the organisation
- failing to consider the longer-term impact of a project or initiative.

## Value: professional integrity and respect

*We act impartially, treating all people with dignity and respect.*

Acceptable behaviours include:

- making decisions and providing relevant and accurate advice without bias, impulsiveness, favouritism or self-interest
- being well-prepared, organised and punctual
- acting in accordance with clients' interests within departmental guidelines
- treating others with respect regardless of background or situation
- displaying honesty, openness, and transparency in dealing with others
- making commitments only when they can be kept
- using sound professional practices and keeping-up-to-date with best practice standards
- providing advice and services in a professional manner to implement government policy
- acting fairly by objectively considering all relevant information, facts and criteria
- striving to best avoid, deal with, or resolve conflicts of interest in a transparent manner
- supporting an environment that is free from discrimination, harassment, and bullying

- maintaining confidentiality of client, staff and departmental information
- using legitimate authority responsibly where decisions and actions are clearly made in the best interest of the client
- striving to earn and sustain a high level of public trust by delivering high quality, objective and responsive services to all stakeholders.

### Unacceptable behaviours include:

- dealing with foreseeable problems only as they arise, rather than planning ahead
- failing to share pertinent information
- failing to model professionalism
- behaving in a manner that is inconsistent with the department's mission
- displaying disrespectful behaviour such as being late for meetings or being rude or abusive towards staff, clients or colleagues
- using the authority of the role for purposes that may not serve the best interests of the client
- failing to acknowledge relationships or activity that is a clear conflict of interest
- taking action or making decisions where justification and rationale are unclear.

## Value: quality

*We always strive to do our best and improve the way we work.*

Acceptable behaviours include:

- looking for ways to improve how work is done
- identifying and implementing actions to improve quality and promote best practice delivery of our services
- establishing high standards and working to achieve them
- encouraging others to find better ways to work
- providing high quality services to the Victorian community.

Unacceptable behaviours include:

- consistently settling for 'near enough is good enough'
- tolerating poor quality work
- tolerating inefficient or mediocre processes and performance
- failing to consider advice from key stakeholders on how something may be improved
- failing to consider the reputation of the department in the quality of service that is provided to clients.

## Value: collaborative relationships

*We work together to achieve better results.*

Acceptable behaviours include:

- being receptive to the ideas and opinions of others
- sharing information, knowledge and expertise with colleagues within the department or other agencies
- recognising those who have performed well
- soliciting others' expertise and suggestions
- working cooperatively with colleagues or other agencies to achieve common goals
- providing support and assistance to colleagues.

Unacceptable behaviours include:

- keeping information to oneself
- being typically 'too busy' to assist or help others
- taking credit for the work of others.

## Value: responsibility

*We commit to the actions we take to achieve the best possible outcomes for our clients.*

Acceptable behaviours include:

- taking responsibility for providing information and services to clients in a timely and effective way
- taking appropriate actions without being asked
- acting decisively
- demonstrating appropriate ownership of problems, mistakes, successes and issues
- taking all appropriate actions to maintain the safety and wellbeing of clients and colleagues
- developing clear objectives and working towards them in a transparent manner
- accepting responsibility for, and ownership of, decisions and actions
- providing the best possible outcomes by using available resources efficiently and effectively
- being open to appropriate evaluation and monitoring
- providing factual, impartial, and timely advice to the government either directly or via others within the department.

Unacceptable behaviours include:

- starting tasks but rarely finishing them when there is an opportunity to do so
- refusing to take on a challenge
- treating any problems or issues that arise as someone else's problem
- addressing issues only when they become critical
- failing to assume ownership for a decision or activity that you have carried out.



