



*Our vision is to be the centrepiece for mental health learning in Victoria; leading and driving innovation that strengthens and sustains a flexible, curious, knowledgeable and recovery-focused workforce.*

## **CMHL Participant Expectations**

The CMHL welcomes you to our learning community. We wish to provide you and other participants with clear expectations about your involvement in our community. Our goal at CMHL is to promote safe, trauma-informed learning spaces. We foster spaces where people can learn, reflect, challenge the status quo, and expand their understanding of mental health and wellbeing. The safety of our participants is of utmost importance. Therefore, there are some participant actions we appreciate, some we may mediate, and some we will not tolerate.

A trauma-informed training space requires people to first be aware of their language, their actions and their power in the group. It then asks those present to be aware of power differentials.

We appreciate:

- Respecting others' opinions and differences
- Listening to others and not engaging in other tasks while in sharing spaces
- Waiting for someone else to finish speaking before unmuting or speaking
- Giving everyone the opportunity to speak and sharing the floor
- Using the raise hand button to speak
- Maintaining confidentiality. If anyone shares something private, it should not be repeated to anyone else
- Acting with kindness
- Showing up with a curious mind
- Knowing that at times we will 'sit in the grey' in terms of our own comfort levels

We do not tolerate

(Immediate action may be taken such as muting or removing from the training space)

- Discriminating against people based on diagnosis, race, nationality, gender, or sexual orientation
- Using inflammatory or hate speech
- Engaging in antagonistic, badgering, singling-out or bullying behaviour
- Threats of any kind
- Preventing others from speaking
- Sending unsolicited personal messages (harassment)
- Using the online 'chat' to express any of the above positions

Why we may mediate:

The Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System (RCVMHS) has found that many of the systems need to be better. Thinking of a new, consumer-driven system that upholds human rights is a big shift, and sometimes people make

mistakes or perpetuate harmful language unwittingly. Shutting this down can impede learning, but some situations may require swift action to keep the space safe. If something you say may come across as stigmatising, or cause harm, we may need to mediate and unpack in a reflective way, hopefully coming to a resolution.

Being a supportive community member includes doing a bit of homework and being bold enough to acknowledge mistakes. While we all may make mistakes, failing to listen respectfully or acknowledge when another community member is brave enough to share that something you said may have caused harm, stigma or shame, does not promote a safe space.

If we are concerned about participant actions during training, such as any of those described as actions we do not tolerate, or if mediation and unpacking has failed to sustain a safe learning space, we may need to discuss our concerns with your service's workforce development committee representative and/or your direct manager.

## **Why is this important?**

People enter our training spaces with a wide range of experiences. Some have been harmed as a result of their involvement in the mental health system. The Royal Commission has found that people have experienced coercion, involuntary detention, physical, emotional, and sexual trauma as a result of the MH system. We privilege lived experience voices in this space - if a lived experience worker or training deliverer speaks of their lived experience as a mental health service consumer, their experience is not up for debate.

A safe space is generally understood to be a place or environment in which a person or category/group of people can feel confident that they will not be exposed to discrimination, criticism, harassment, or any other emotional or physical harm.

The CMHL promotes learning environments. When people who have traditionally been marginalised, coerced, or threatened, enter a space that they do not feel is safe, they can be on alert, vigilant and feel they need to have their 'guard up'. Evidence in learning and trauma demonstrates that when there is a perceived threat, the person is not in a space to learn, engage or trust. It can be physically, mentally and emotionally exhausting.

We are also aware of POWER and who in our communities traditionally hold power over the narrative, and that many people who have been consumers and family members or carers have had others write their narrative for them through diagnosis, case notes, clinical reviews and / or denigrating or stigmatising language having others with expert power strip them of their own meaning making for their experiences.

'Safe spaces can provide a break from judgment, unsolicited opinions, and having to explain yourself. It also allows people to feel supported and respected. This is especially important for minorities, members of the LGBTQIA community, and other marginalized groups.'  
(healthline, YEE <https://www.healthline.com/health/mental-health/safe-spaces-college#8> )

Thanks for participating in CMHL's training and helping to create safer spaces that facilitate learning for all. We believe our training can support the workforce to play its crucial role in realising the Royal Commission's vision for reform.