

DO YOU UNDERSTAND THE ACSO AOD ASSESSMENT UMBRELLA?

Do you ever wonder what ACSO and the forensic AOD system have in common, and what how does COATS relate to ACSO? Below is a simple guide to understand what we do at ACSO.

What does ACSO stand for and what does it do?

Australian Community Support Organisation offers various services responding to mental illness, disability, homelessness, substance use and offending behaviour throughout the state of Victoria. ACSO also delivers forensic services and programs for people who are transitioning from prison back into the community, along with those with complex and multiple issues who are either in or are risk of entering the criminal justice system.

What is ACSO Connect?

ACSO Connect is a division of ACSO that delivers assessment for drug and alcohol use and mental health. ACSO Connect contains three program areas including its state-wide service COATS, and regional programs Voluntary AOD (VAOD) and Mental Health Community Support Services (MHCSS). As you can imagine, there is a fair amount of overlap between these three areas, even more so between COATS and VAOD.

What is COATS?

Community Offenders Advice and Treatment Service is a state-wide service and primarily has the following functions:

1. Undertaking forensic AOD assessment of clients referred by Corrections Victoria; and refer to and purchase treatment from community AOD treatment providers
2. Arrange assessment and/or treatment for clients referred by other areas within Department of Justice and purchase this from community AOD treatment providers
3. Reconciliation and reporting on AOD treatment providers' financial targets/DTAUs on behalf of DHHS

What is VAOD?

Voluntary Alcohol and Other Drug program delivers AOD assessment to clients across regional Victoria (excluding Barwon). Clients or their peers, family or health workers can make referrals to the VAOD team at ACSO Connect if they are experiencing issues arising from alcohol or drugs which could place themselves or others at risk of harm. The aim of the assessment is to determine the most suitable services requires for their needs, and assist with access into these services. Take note, this program is known to the community as ACSO Connect however to distinguish between forensic and voluntary referral types to stakeholders, this branch is referred to internally and with AOD treatment providers as VAOD.



HOW DOES THE FORENSIC AOD SYSTEM WORK IN RELATION TO ASSESSMENT AND TREATMENT?

Welcome to the COATS program, where COATS, Department of Justice and AOD treatment providers all work in collaboration to provide drug and alcohol assessment and treatment to clients involved in the Criminal Justice system.

So who refers who, from where and for what?

Please refer to the *COATS Referral into Alcohol & Drug Treatment Matrix* document for more details relating to the possible referrals you might receive from COATS.

When ACSO Connect (including COATS and VAOD) refers to your agency, what can you expect to happen?

1. COATS Brokerage team will send an email from brokerage@acso.org.au containing referral to a central contact email address at your agency or consortium.
2. This email will include a standardised template advising of a referral and contains the following information:
 - a. Client Name
 - b. DOB
 - c. Contact Number
 - d. Address
 - e. Appointment Preferences
 - f. Treatment Type and Preferred Site
 - g. Event ID (which provides the agency access to the assessment documentation in Penelope, therefore this is only available for treatment referrals, not the assessment referrals)
3. Treatment providers can search the Penelope portal using their shared username/specified username and the Event ID provided in the referral email. In the portal they can review the following information and documents to assist with determining allocation to a suitable clinician:
 - a. Client demographic and contact details
 - b. Referral Types (whether it's a CCO, CISP, Parole referral etc)
 - c. Justice case manager name and contact details (if applicable)
 - d. Initial treatment plan
 - e. AOD Comprehensive Assessment document
 - f. Step 1. Initial Screen Documentation
 - g. Forensic Assessment Report for COATS assessed clients
 - h. Assessment attendance details
4. Treatment providers will review the referral and reply by email to brokerage@acso.org.au to advise either that the referral has or has not been accepted.
 - a. If the treatment provider does not accept the referral: COATS will attempt to refer the client to alternative services, where possible. Note, even if you cannot accept the client it is imperative you inform COATS otherwise this client will continue to remain on your wait list.
 - b. If the treatment provider does accept the referral: Agency will provide COATS with an initial appointment time and process the details in Penelope.
 - c. For residential services the appointment date used in Penelope may include a referral acceptance date, assessment date or admission date.
5. For Justice referrals, confirmation of this appointment is required within 48 hours of referral and clients will be notified of appointments, either by COATS or case managers.
 - a. Treatment provider may choose to negotiate an appointment time with the client first, however COATS must be notified of the appointment with the two-day timeframe.
6. If treatment providers do not provide COATS with an appointment or acceptance date, clients will remain on the waiting list for the service and are reporting to DHHS as awaiting treatment.

SO I'VE LEARNT ABOUT COATS, BUT WHERE DOES VAOD FROM ACSO CONNECT FIT INTO ALL OF THIS?

ACSO Connect is the intake and assessment provider in the Great South Coast, Gippsland, Goulburn Valley, Grampians, Hume and Loddon Mallee catchments of Victoria. Therefore, at times, when COATS receives a CISP referral from La Trobe Valley Magistrates Court, and the client does not fit the criteria for the local Youth or Aboriginal treatment provider, COATS will need to refer internally to the VAOD team in Gippsland to undertake this assessment. This also means that although VAOD (truly known as ACSO Connect) is for clients who are 'voluntarily' referred to 'voluntary' AOD services, that the VAOD team also undertake forensic assessment on occasion.

Instances where ACSO Connect's VAOD area will deliver assessments on forensic clients will be:

- CISP
 - Clients located in the Gippsland region who are reporting to a Justice Case Manager at La Trobe Valley Magistrates' Court
 - Clients located in the Loddon Mallee region who are reporting to a Justice Case Manager at Mildura Magistrates' Court
 - CISP is due to expand throughout additional regional areas in 2016
- CREDIT Bail
 - Clients located in the Grampians region who are reporting to a Justice Case Manager at Ballarat Magistrates' Court
- DDAL
 - Clients located in any of the above regional areas where ACSO Connect provides assessments
- Other Diversion
 - ACSO Connect, just like other assessment or treatment providers, may assess a client who is eligible for Other Diversion (NIDS) funding due to the client's current involvement with the Criminal Justice system.

Will the COATS Assessment look the same as the assessment by the VAOD team in Penelope?

Almost. Assessments undertaken by COATS assessors will be referred to as 'COATS Assessment', where as assessments undertaken by the VAOD team (and external intake and assessment providers) will be AOD – Comprehensive Assessments. Furthermore, you will not find the 'AOD Forensic Assessment Report' in a DDAL or Other Diversion cases (simply because we're not providing this to the court), but there will still be an AOD Assessment Report.

The Nutshell

So that's ACSO Connect in a nutshell for you. There are actually more referrals that COATS receive however these are unlikely to be sent to your service therefore these have not been included this time. Make sure that you also have your *COATS Referral into Alcohol & Drug Treatment Matrix* document handy, your Penelope guides and your Diversion referral information so that you can register your client as COATS.

Still unsure and would like some key contacts?

- COATS Brokerage Team can be contacted on 03 9413 7196 or email through your enquiries to intake@acso.org.au. Please note the brokerage@acso.org.au is strictly for referral correspondence, not general enquires.
- ACSO Connect Management can also be contacted on 03 9413 7000 and ACSO Reception will direct you to an available staff member.