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| Statewide Referral Criteria |
| Summary of key evaluation findings |
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#### Background

Statewide referral criteria (SRC) are standardised tools that were developed from 2018 to help clinicians make appropriate referrals to specialist clinics. A program evaluation was undertaken in 2022-2023 to explore the development and implementation of SRC to understand the impact and outcomes of this project.

#### Key Findings

The introduction of SRC has achieved its intended outcomes of

* clarifying when a referral to a public specialist clinic is needed
* agreeing on the minimum information that should be included in the referral
* improving communication between referring clinicians and health services.

The overall quality of referrals has improved, suggesting inappropriate and incomplete referrals have declined because of the introduction of SRC. It is now easier to find incomplete referrals and SRC have improved consistency of referral acceptance across health services.

Data extracted from the Victorian Integrated Non-Admitted Health (VINAH) dataset for 2019 to 2022, show a clear downward trend in the total number of referrals received for SRC specialities, when compared to other specialities, from their implementation in 2019 (Figure 1). The introduction of SRC has also supported or driven the creation of templates and the use of e-Referrals across Victorian health services.

Figure 1 Year to year trend analysis of combined number of referrals received

#### Next Steps

The department intends to complete its workplan developing SRC for identified high volume specialties.

The department needs to continue to identify effective communication strategies with primary care clinicians to foster a more positive understanding of the broader of SRC work.

The department intends to conduct a subsequent evaluation at the completion of the implementation of the planned SRC, including consumers in that evaluation to understand the impact of SRC on the patient journey.

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