



wellways helping families & friends find better ways

The mental health service delivery framework in NSW

General Information

- Public and private, government and non-government, and hospital and community comprise the New South Wales Mental Health Services
- The state government is the major provider of acute services for people with serious mental illness
- The usual way to contact a mental health service is via a visit to your local General Practitioner. Your GP will refer you to either a private mental health professional or your local public mental health service
- NSW Health provides a range of specialised mental health services to adults who are developing or experiencing mental health problems or disorders
- Services are primarily delivered by Area Mental Health Services within the state (ten metropolitan areas and eight rural areas). Area Mental Health Services provide inpatient, hospital-based, and community mental health services for all age groups across the spectrum of mental health care - from emergency response to less urgent mental health consultations
- There is also a number of statewide, regional and specialist services, including Early Intervention Services and Justice Health
- There are 24-hour telephone contact numbers for all NSW Area Mental Health Services.

Adult Mental Health Services

Hospital Inpatient Services

- Consultation Liaison Psychiatry provides assessment, consultation and referral for patients in general Emergency Departments. This service also provides Psychogeriatric and GP Shared Care

- **Acute Inpatient Services** (wards) provide voluntary and involuntary short-term management during an acute phase of mental illness. These are usually located and managed as part of general hospitals
- **Residential Services** are services for people with serious mental illness and major psychosocial disabilities, which assist in preparation for community living. Supported accommodation is sometimes available as part of both public and non-government housing
- **Secure/Extended Care Inpatient Services** provide a safe, supportive place for people with a serious mental illness whose behaviours may put themselves or others at risk. Their purpose is to provide bed-based intensive treatment and care to clients who have unremitting and severe symptoms which inhibit their capacity to live in the community.

Community-based services and teams

These services offer case management, assessment, counselling, medication management and supervision and rehabilitation.

- **Mental Health Crisis Team** assesses people for hospital admission and treats and supports people whose acute or sub acute episodes can be managed in the community (some are 24hours)
- **Mobile Treatment Services** are available in some areas and they provide intensive long-term support, assisting many people in special residential services, boarding homes and at home
- **Community Mental Health Centres** provide assessment (including initial assessment where a Crisis Team is not

required), treatment, consultancy, continuing care and case management

- **Early Intervention Teams** provide early intervention upon first diagnosis of mental illness
- Case management provides a range of practical and therapeutic interventions. Emphasis is given to assisting people to develop skills in self-care and independent living in their own environment
- Intensive case management services are provided to a small number of patients. Mental Health professionals work intensively with these people on an individual basis keeping them engaged with the service and assisting them with a variety of day to day living activities.

Private psychiatric services

- Although General Practitioners (GPs) are generally in the private sector, in practice they form part of the public mental health system
- Private GPs are often the first point of contact for people with mental health problems. GPs will refer people to either a private mental health professional or to the local public mental health service
- People with mental illness treated by Area Mental Health Services will most often be discharged to the care of GPs in the local community as soon as is practically possible. This makes having a relationship with a good GP very important
- GPs who work out of Shared Care services work in multidisciplinary teams and are often well placed to work with people with mental health issues

The mental health service delivery framework in NSW continued...

- GPs are supported in their work by Area Mental Health Teams and the Mental Health Drug & Alcohol Office
 - The most common way of seeing a private psychiatrist is through a referral from a GP (Fees vary, and some psychiatrists bulk bill). Private psychiatrists may not always be available, especially in rural areas
 - Private psychiatrists mainly provide outpatient services from their consulting rooms or inpatient services to private hospitals. They may have specialist interests (eg. working with particular age groups or disorders, and using specific therapies)
 - Private psychiatrists and GPs may work together with Case Management Services in assisting patients to develop skills in self-care and independent living. The private sector incorporates private psychiatric hospitals, but these generally exist only in larger population centres, and they do not take people who require involuntary admission.
- ## Psychiatric Disability Rehabilitation and Support Services
- Largely provided by a non-government sector (eg. Schizophrenia Fellowship of NSW), a range of services provide employment, placement, support, information, day and residential programs and family respite.
- Psychosocial Rehabilitation Day Programs assist people with severe psychiatric disabilities to improve their quality of life, participate in everyday activities and achieve optimal independent functioning in the community
 - Respite services provides a short-term change in environment or additional support for a carer. It may involve day activities (including social and recreational) for the consumer, in-home support, holidays and adventure activities and residential components. Respite can be planned and/or regular and, in some regions, short notice respite is available
 - Residential Rehabilitation provides intensive psychosocial rehabilitation and supports in group accommodation prior to residents living independently. The emphasis is on developing or regaining skills to deal with daily living activities. Emphasis is placed on developing a resident's confidence to begin or continue schooling, training or employment, as well as supporting positive contact with family and friends
 - Group homes are mostly operated by non-government organisations with some provided through the public mental health system. According to the Memorandum of Understanding between the NSW Department of Health and the Department of Housing (DoH), consumers living in DoH housing have a right to mental health services and NSW Health is obliged to provide this service. The HASI program also operates to support people with a mental illness living in public housing
 - Specialist community mental health services provide home visits for those people who are home bound or outreach mental health services to rural and remote community health services
 - Employment services of both state and commonwealth departments provide employment placement and support to people with a mental illness.

Useful references

- Schizophrenia Fellowship of NSW Inc.
www.sfnsw.org.au Mental Illness Fellowship of Australia
www.mifa.org.au
- Mental Illness Fellowship Victoria
www.mifellowship.org
- State Mental Health Information Service
02 9816 5688 or 1800 674 200
- Mental Health Services
www.mentalhealth.asn.au
- Lawlink (Attorney General's Department)
www.lawlink.nsw.gov.au
Toll free 1800 684 449
- Mental Health Coordinating Council
www.mhcc.org.au
02 9555 8388
- Mental Health Review Tribunal
02 9816 5955
- National Alliance of the Mentally Ill (USA)
www.nami.org

Mental Illness Fellowship of Australia fact sheets

- Mental health legal framework in NSW
- What can friends and family do to help a person experiencing mental illness?
- Family and carer supports and services