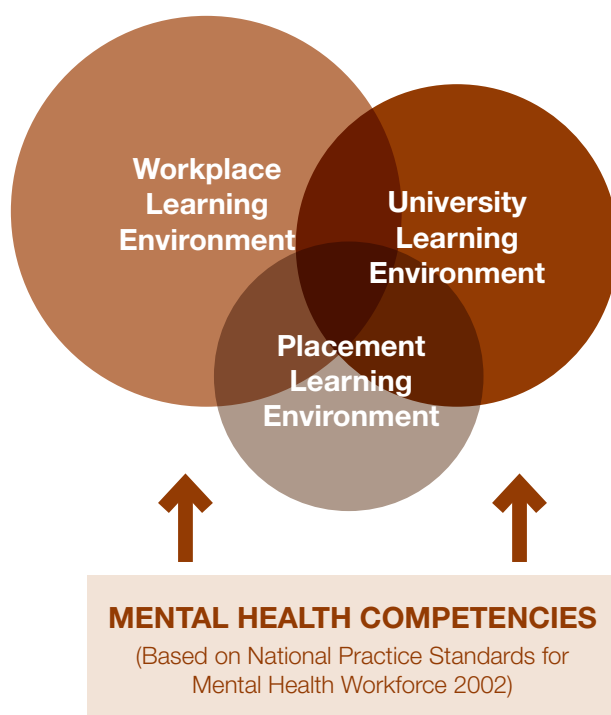


chapter 6:

linking work and study

This chapter brings together in detail the three components of the Aboriginal Mental Health Worker Training Program Learning Model—the workplace learning environment, the university learning environment and the placement learning environment. It links workplace training with the CSU Bachelor of Health Science (Mental Health) course work and clinical placement requirements to demonstrate how the components can complement and reinforce each other over the three years of the Traineeship.



Progressing from year one through year three

Trainees will meet with their Line Manager and the Clinical Leader Aboriginal Mental Health at the beginning of each year and then periodically to set targets for their work and study and to plan rotations and placements.

The following list outlines the skills, knowledge and activities Trainees can be expected to achieve during each of the three years of on-the-job training and university attendance.¹

Trainees will progressively develop as mental health professionals over this period through:

- the development of skills and experience gained in the workplace as employees of a particular mental health and/or drug and alcohol service or social and emotional wellbeing team
- the development of skills and experience gained through rotations and placements with a range of mental health and associated services and programs
- gaining knowledge of the theoretical underpinnings of their mental health practice through their university study.

This information will assist Trainees to know the levels of skills and knowledge that are expected of them each year and will assist Line Managers, mental health workers, supervisors and Trainees to ensure that the required skills are gained. It will also help to ensure that Trainees are not expected to work above their level of training and competence at any given time. It will assist to manage community expectations by being explicit about workplace expectations. At all times, the safety and wellbeing of consumers and staff are the priority considerations. Trainees will be supported to aim for high-quality interactions and interventions with consumers, carers and colleagues.

It is important to note that the following section is a guide only. The 'Community mental health workload guidelines' (a supporting document for Chapter 3: Workplace Training and Support) outline the minimum expectations and assume the Trainee is a member of a multidisciplinary, community mental health team. Adaptations will need to be made taking into account the composition, service focus and workload of the team employing the Trainee.

Furthermore, Trainees come into the Aboriginal Mental Health Worker Training Program with a range of skills, knowledge and experience. Therefore, the first-year activities will need to be set accordingly and the following years will build on these. It is recommended that a skills audit is conducted at the beginning of each year so that skill and knowledge strengths and weaknesses can be identified and taken into account when planning the year's activities.



Read this chapter in conjunction with chapters 3, 4 and 5 and see 'How to do a skills audit' in Chapter 3: Workplace Training and Support.



See supporting document community mental health workload guidelines in Chapter 3: Workplace Training and Support.



See 'Example: GSAHS links work and study' in 'Supporting document and resources' at the end of this chapter.

Year One

Overview

Year One is the time for Trainees to be orientated to and learn about what it is to be employees of NSW Health and of the particular mental health and drug and alcohol services in which they are employed. In addition, the Trainee will be orientated to the requirements for the Bachelor of Health Science (Mental Health) and what is expected of them as students.

In Year One, Trainees undertake course work in the following areas:

- **Session 1:** Introduction to Mental Health; Social and Emotional Wellbeing; Mental Health Across the Life Span 1; Introduction to Substance Use: Assessment and Intervention
- **Session 2:** Introduction to Primary Health Care: Mental Health 1 (clinical placement subject); Mental Health Across the Life Span 2; Healing Our People (Counselling 1) (clinical placement subject)—and **one** from the electives Alcohol and Other Drugs: Assessment and Intervention; and Body, Illness and Health.

First six months (Session 1): the Line Manager, the Clinical Leader Aboriginal Mental Health and the Trainee will conduct a skills audit and modify the workplace development expectations to suit the Trainee's skill level.

In the first half of the year Trainees will get to know the organisation, read policies and procedures manuals, and become familiar with Codes of Conduct and relevant legislation such as the *(NSW) Mental Health Act* and the *Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act*.

Trainees will work with a preceptor to observe various mental health and counselling activities, including triage work, and will learn about standardised documentation (MH-OAT) and relevant information databases (Service Contact Information & Mental Health Outcomes and Assessment Tool (SCI MH-OAT) and Monitoring AOD Treatment Information System for Services Everywhere (MATISSE)). They will also attend workshops, meetings and mandatory training. Trainees will have no direct contact with consumers until successfully completing the first performance appraisal at the end of three months.

Throughout this time, Trainees will spend between two weeks and six weeks with each member of the multidisciplinary team to gain familiarity with the different roles and responsibilities within the multidisciplinary team.

Trainees will attend the required residential teaching blocks at CSU in January and April. During this period tutors will be arranged and Trainees will work with them to complete assignments according to schedule.

Second six months (Session 2): in this period Trainees will observe all aspects of mental health and drug and alcohol work (depending on the team's role). They will participate in a range of observational activities that may include ward rounds in the inpatient unit and triage processes. They are encouraged to participate in and ask questions about triage processes and procedures, and to begin to practise completing MH-OAT forms, entering mock data into SCI MH-OAT and MATISSE, and engaging in discussions about assessments with their preceptors and workplace-based supervisors.

Trainees will work with their supervisors in targeting and observing goals set down in the training plan. They will attend meetings with the Line Manager, workplace-based supervisor, clinical leader, visiting consultant and mentor (if they have one), and participate in mandatory training.

During this period the Trainee will spend time becoming familiar with the range of associated services in the local area, including the Primary Health Care Service and team, the local hospital, aged care programs and facilities, police and other agencies identified when developing the community profile.

Trainees will attend the required residential teaching blocks at CSU in June and August. They will work with their tutors during the semester to complete their university assignments on schedule. The clinical placements for Session 2, Year One, involve a two-week placement in each workplace: a mental health setting where counselling is offered and in a Primary Health Care setting.

Specific work tasks

In relation to professional standards, Trainees will:

- learn about the importance of confidentiality and the issues faced by mental health workers and begin to maintain confidentiality at all times
- learn about the NSW Health, Area Health Service and CSU Codes of Conduct and ethical behaviour and begin to observe them
- learn about the (NSW) Mental Health Act, and NSW Health, Area Health Service and local policies and procedures
- learn about the work activities and responsibilities of each position in the multidisciplinary mental health team
- actively participate as part of the multidisciplinary team
- learn about the MH-OAT forms and other key forms and computer programs, including SCI MH-OAT and MATISSE
- learn about the work activities and responsibilities of the primary health care and associated health and community services in the local area
- review their own learning and development plans with the Line Manager every three months to monitor progress with regards to:
 - o Trainee performance targets
 - o satisfactory completion of academic and clinical course requirements.



It is essential that Trainees submit their assignments and any other required documentation in time for them to be marked and for marks to be submitted for inclusion in the academic year transcript. This academic transcript will need to be given to the Line Manager so that the Trainee's employment can be continued. Ongoing employment is dependent on passing university course requirements, as well as on satisfactory work performance. After viewing, academic transcripts should be sent to Human Resources for the personnel file established for the Trainee.

In relation to clinical work, Trainees will:

- gain a good understanding of mental health services and the type of work undertaken within the various services with regard to regulations and limitations
- gain a good understanding of the requirements of working in a multidisciplinary mental health (and drug and alcohol) team
- form a regular preceptor relationship with an assigned clinical and /or community worker
- gain an understanding of the roles and responsibilities of different team members and who to report to with regard to particular issues
- support community members to have an understanding about the range of services, programs and activities that are provided
- gain experience of therapy groups in a mental health service (by attending groups, observing or helping out, and by discussing issues with preceptor such as how the group is run, the purpose of group therapy and the types of mental health issues people experience).

To learn about community development and health promotion, Trainees will:

- prepare a community profile, including available services and programs
- inform the community about available mental health (and drug and alcohol) services
- communicate community expectations to team members
- contribute to the development of community development and health promotion programs
- assist with the implementation and administration of community development and health promotion programs and events
- advise mental health colleagues on cultural aspects in relation to community-based programs.

In general, Trainees will:

- achieve targets specified in the learning and development plan
- document work and learning activities on proformas as agreed with a work-based supervisor
- keep a diary and a journal
- write reports as directed, with reference to levels of competence especially in relation to spelling, grammar, accuracy of observations and sequence of events
- gain proficiency in data entry, in particular SCI MH-OAT and MATISSE, through mock data entry and real data entry as appropriate
- participate in and take an active role in meetings
- be proactive in making the most of learning opportunities available in the workplace
- actively participate in learning opportunities that are facilitated by the team
- negotiate support for their own learning
- discuss Trainee and team members' expectations of each other.

To complete the Year One education requirements, Trainees need to:

- undertake Year One of the Bachelor of Health Science (Mental Health) course
- attend all residential teaching blocks and lectures because they are compulsory
- successfully complete required course assessment activities by the due dates
- undertake required clinical placements by due dates
- undertake mandatory training as specified by the Area Health Service
- attend the annual Aboriginal Mental Health Workers Forum.

Year Two

Overview

In Year Two Trainees are expected to be fully aware of their responsibilities as employees of NSW Health and mental health (and drug and alcohol) services. They will continue to build their skills and knowledge based on their workplace and placement experiences.

As Trainees progress through university course work, they will need to be making links between theory and practice.

In Year Two Trainees undertake course work in the following areas:

- **Session 3:** Assessment, Diagnosis and Management in Psychiatry; Crisis Management (clinical placement subject); Healing Our Spirit: Grief, Loss and Trauma (clinical placement subject); Mental Health, Law and Ethics
- **Session 4:** Assessment, Diagnosis and Management in Psychiatry (clinical placement subject); Healing Our People (Counselling 2); Primary Health Care: Mental Health 2—and one from the electives Suicide Prevention; Alcohol and Other Drugs: Interventions; and Working with Children and Adolescents.

First six months (Session 3): in Year Two Trainees can undertake limited practise under observation. They are able to undertake non-directive interviewing and questioning and to prepare case presentations in collaboration with their workplace-based supervisor. Trainees will enter client and non-client activity into SCI MH-OAT and MATISSE.

Trainees will attend the required residential teaching blocks at CSU in January and April.

They will work with their tutors during the semester to complete their university assignments on schedule. The clinical placements for Session 3, Year Two, involve a two-week placement in each workplace to provide the following clinical experience: crisis management and counselling around grief, loss and trauma.

Second six months (Session 4): by the second half of Year Two, Trainees can practise under observation and undertake supportive counselling under close supervision with selected cases (low acuity/low complexity).

Trainees will attend the required residential teaching blocks at CSU in June and August. They will work with their tutors to complete their university assignments on schedule. The clinical placement for Session 4, Year Two, involves a four-week placement in Assessment, Diagnosis and Management in Psychiatry.

Specific work tasks

In relation to professional standards, Trainees will:

- observe provisions of the NSW Health, Area Health Service and CSU Codes of Conduct and policies and procedures
- maintain confidentiality at all times
- maintain high professional standards at all times
- continue to actively participate as part of the multidisciplinary team
- participate in and prepare for supervision
- review their own learning and development plan with the Line Manager every six months to monitor progress with regards to:
 - Trainee performance targets
 - satisfactory completion of academic and clinical course requirements.

In addition to Year One specific work tasks in clinical work, Trainees will:

- undertake joint case management with members of the mental health (and drug and alcohol) team
- participate in clinical review and discharge planning of consumers/patients in hospital
- actively participate in case presentations
- participate in structured learning and feedback processes for interviews.

To learn about community development and health promotion, Trainees will:

- under supervision, work collaboratively with staff and agencies to develop, deliver and evaluate community-based programs
- identify needs and feedback needs to the mental health (and drug and alcohol) team
- advocate for the community within the multidisciplinary team.

In general, Trainees will:

- maintain and complete accurate notes and other documentation in consumer/client records
- keep a diary and a journal
- write reports as directed, with reference to level of competence, especially in relation to spelling, grammar, accuracy of observations and sequence of events
- document work on agreed forms
- participate in and take an active role in meetings
- actively participate in learning opportunities that are facilitated by the team
- be proactive in making the most of learning opportunities available in the workplace
- achieve targets specified in the learning and development plan
- negotiate support for own learning
- discuss Trainee and team members' expectations of each other.

To complete the Year Two education requirements, Trainees need to:

- undertake Year Two of the Bachelor of Health Science (Mental Health) course
- attend all residential teaching blocks and lectures because they are compulsory
- successfully complete required course assessment activities by the due dates
- undertake required clinical placements by due dates
- attend the annual Aboriginal Mental Health Workers Forum
- attend relevant seminars, forums and short courses as approved.

Year Three

Overview

By Year Three Trainees take a more responsible role in all areas of mental health (and drug and alcohol) work. Course work builds on knowledge and skills gained in Years One and Two.

In Year Three Trainees undertake course work in the following areas:

- **Session 5:** Research in Mental Health (clinical placement subject); Professional Issues in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Mental Health; Sexual Assault and Family Violence; Mental Health and Substance Use (Dual Diagnosis) (clinical placement subject)
- **Session 6:** Research in Mental Health; Professional Issues in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Mental Health (clinical placement subject); Working with Families (clinical placement subject)—and one from the electives Forensic Mental Health; Advanced Skills in Drug and Alcohol Work; and Community Action Against Sexual Assault and Family Violence.

First six months (Session 5): by the beginning of Year Three, Trainees will have gained experience and skills in doing triage work, processes and procedures. Trainees are expected to take the lead on intake under close supervision.

They are able to conduct small/ongoing therapy sessions under observation and in conjunction with their workplace-based supervisor and will be able to do supportive counselling under close supervision.

Trainees will attend the required residential teaching blocks at CSU in January and April.

They will work with their tutors to complete their university assignments on schedule. The clinical placements for Session 5 involve a two-week placement in workplaces to provide the following clinical experiences: Mental Health and Substance Use (Dual Diagnosis) and Research in Mental Health.

Second six months (Session 6): the Trainee will have gained sufficient experience to conduct intake independently under close supervision, to conduct a full assessment under observation and take the lead in all phases of therapy under observation, provide supportive counselling under supervision and provide ongoing therapy of non-acute cases under close supervision. Trainees are able to plan, implement and evaluate a small-scale health promotion program under supervision.

Trainees will attend the required residential teaching blocks at CSU in June and August. They will work with their tutors to complete their university assignments on schedule. The clinical placement for Session 6, Year Three, involves a two-week placement in a service offering family assessment and therapy and two weeks exploring professional issues in preparation for the third-year conference.

Specific work tasks

In relation to professional standards, Trainees will:

- observe provisions of the NSW Health, Area Health Service and CSU Codes of Conduct and policies and procedures
- maintain confidentiality at all times
- maintain high professional standards at all times
- continue to actively participate as part of the multidisciplinary team
- participate in and prepare for supervision
- review their own learning and development plan with the Line Manager every six months to monitor progress with regards to:
 - o Trainee performance targets
 - o satisfactory completion of academic and clinical course requirements
- understand the principles of quality improvement and be actively involved in quality programs.

In addition to Year One and Year Two specific work tasks in clinical work, Trainees will:

- undertake co-case management
- undertake case management under supervision
- facilitate improved access to mental health and drug and alcohol services to Aboriginal people and the wider community
- advocate and advise on behalf of Aboriginal consumers at case discussions and legal hearings as appropriate to ensure that the needs of the consumer are expressed
- work collaboratively with families, communities, government and non-government organisations, health service staff and relevant support services to ensure consumer needs are met
- participate in clinical review and discharge planning for ongoing mental health care under supervision
- support and participate in activities related to promotion of mental health and prevention of mental illness under supervision
- assist in referrals for consumers to relevant health and appropriate services under supervision.

To learn about community development and health promotion, Trainees will:

- plan, implement and evaluate health promotion and community development programs.

In general, Trainees will:

- maintain and complete accurate notes and other documentation in consumer/client records
- keep a diary and a journal
- write reports as directed, with reference to level of competence, especially in relation to spelling, grammar, accuracy of observations and sequence of events
- document work on agreed forms

- participate in and take an active role in meetings
- actively participate in learning opportunities that are facilitated by the team
- be proactive in making the most of learning opportunities available in the workplace
- achieve targets specified in the learning and development plan
- negotiate support for their own learning
- discuss Trainee and team members' expectations of each other
- prepare a seminar presentation for the work team on projects undertaken as part of the university course.

To complete the Year Three education requirements, Trainees need to:

- undertake Year Three of the Bachelor of Health Science (Mental Health) course
- attend all residential teaching blocks and lectures because they are compulsory
- successfully complete required course assessment activities by the due dates
- undertake required clinical placements by due dates
- attend the annual Aboriginal Mental Health Workers Forum
- attend relevant seminars, forums and short courses as approved.

Transition from Trainee to graduate

Provided Trainees have successfully completed the requirements of the Bachelor of Health Science (Mental Health) and performed satisfactorily at work, they will graduate from the Program and commence work as qualified Aboriginal Mental Health Workers in their permanently funded positions.

Graduation from the Program is a great opportunity for the Trainee, the Line Manager and the Clinical Leader to review the position description for Aboriginal Mental Health Worker (Graduate) and discuss ongoing professional development and career pathways. As graduates, they will have a change in status and increased responsibilities. They will be expected both to function as independent mental health clinicians and to continue their development as mental health professionals. It is expected that they will deliver mental health services to any person who presents with mental health problems or concerns.

In some Area Health Services, there is recognition that the degree of Bachelor of Health Science (Mental Health), Djirruwang Program, is educating and training people to be mental health clinicians who are Aboriginal. Upon graduation, these Trainees are transferred to a generic Mental Health Clinician position and are placed on the NSW Health (State) Health Professionals Award under the 'Welfare Officer' classification. This classification recognises the clinical roles they will be performing and provides equity with graduates of other comparable degrees. NSW Health encourages the practice of transferring graduates to appropriate clinical awards and remunerating them accordingly.



Consider having the new graduate (Trainee-in-Transition) address the selection criteria for the position he or she will be occupying and to participate in a mock interview. This process will provide the opportunity for the new graduate to reflect on his/her strengths and weaknesses, as well as to practice being interviewed in a supportive environment.



Ensure that the necessary paperwork has been completed to reclassify the position to 'Graduate' or to transfer the Trainee into a generic mental health clinical position. If the Trainee position becomes vacant, prepare the paperwork for re-filling the Trainee position.

Continuing professional development

The time between handing in the last university assignment and graduation is a good time for Trainees to reflect on their longer term career goals. During the three-year Traineeship, they will have been exposed to a range of services and programs. They may be thinking about a career specialising in one of these areas; for example, child and family mental health or alcohol and other drug work. The workplace can assist in providing opportunities to gain further experience in these areas, at the same time retaining the new graduate in the team.



Discuss the Trainee's career aspirations at the end-of-year performance appraisal and planning session.

The few years after graduation are an opportunity for Aboriginal Mental Health Workers to consolidate what they have learned and to fill in any gaps in generic mental health knowledge and skills. For any new graduate working in the mental health area, there is still much to learn. Conducting a skills audit at this point will be beneficial. It will identify strengths and weaknesses and form the basis for developing an ongoing professional development training plan. In some Area Health Services graduates have gone on to participate in an intern year where they continue to work under supervision and guidance while they consolidate their mental health skills.



Conduct a skills audit at the beginning of the graduate year. Develop a professional development training plan specifying learning outcomes, how these will be achieved and who will be involved.

There are a number of options for continuing professional development. Some mental health services have a formal new graduate program for nurses. For example, in GSAHS, newly graduated Trainees are invited to participate in the 'Study Day' component of the Transitional Mental Health Nurse Program. A wide range of teaching and learning strategies are utilised, from key note presentations to enquiry-based activities and peer group learning to directed learning. Topics covered include, for example, the Mental Health Act, Therapeutic Relationships, Therapies Used in Mental Health, Recovery, Partnership, Cultural Diversity and Drug and Alcohol Co-morbidity.²

Other ways for new graduates to continue developing as mental health professionals include:

- undertaking clinical supervision as specified in the Area Health Service policy
- having ongoing discussions with team members about codes of conduct and codes of practice
- undertaking formal placements in other teams or services
- taking an active role in relevant conferences, forums and workshops
- accessing short courses and training events offered through the Area Health Service
- staying up-to-date with current practice and new initiatives by accessing mental health websites and making visits to Area Health Service, university and TAFE libraries
- reviewing a recent mental health article for discussion at a 'journal club'
- presenting and discussing case studies with peers and clinical supervisors

- teleconferencing periodically with peers to discuss mental health and drug and alcohol issues and sound practice, with a senior clinician facilitating
- participating in a formal mentoring program
- keeping a 'reflective practice' journal with points to discuss with the Clinical Supervisor or co-workers.

Some new graduates may decide to continue studying for an advanced degree, for example, Master in Forensic Mental Health, Master of Mental Health (Child & Adolescent), Master of Family Therapy, while others may enrol in a different but related degree course (for example, social work, psychology or nursing). It is possible to undertake a graduate certificate and graduate diploma in Mental Health covering specific aspects of mental health through the NSW Institute of Psychiatry. Some courses are offered online. Short courses relevant to mental health practice are offered through the TAFE system and sometimes through an Area Health Service's learning and development unit.

 If Trainees intend to remain in their positions while studying, they will need to check the possibilities and negotiate arrangements with their Line Managers.

There are recurrent funds attached to the Traineeship positions specifically for payment of university fees and for education, training and program development activities associated with the Aboriginal Mental Health Workforce Program. Where a graduate from the Training Program continues to be held against a funded Traineeship position, the quarantined funds must then be allocated to programs and initiatives that enhance and develop the Aboriginal mental health workforce within the Area Health Service.

Supporting document and resources

Supporting document	File type	File name	Purpose
Linking work and study			
GSAHS links work and study	Word	LWS_1	Example

Resource	Description
Continuing professional development	
Websites	The New South Wales Institute of Psychiatry < www.nswiop.nsw.edu.au/ >
	TAFE NSW < www.tafensw.edu.au/ >
	NSW Health Workforce Development (Mental Health and Drug and Alcohol) < www.health.nsw.gov.au/mhdao/workforce_development.asp >
Further training opportunities	Contact the Area Health Service Learning and Development Units for a timetable of training opportunities. If there is a university in the area, contact the public relations office about scheduled talks and forums open to the public that may be relevant to mental health and drug and alcohol.

Notes:

- ¹ The information in this chapter is based on C Watson and N Harrison (2006). op. cit., pages 48–59, updated in 2008 by V Crawford and T Sanders and in 2010 for this Practical Guide.
- ² P Brinsmead (2009). *Transitional Mental Health Nurse Program Study Day Handbook 2009*. Greater Southern Area Health Service, Albury. Contact Pam Brinsmead at <pamela.brinsmead@gsahs.health.nsw.gov.au> for further information.