

Mental Health Staff: Roles and Responsibilities¹

This resource is an overview of the roles and responsibilities of mental health staff who are actively involved in the development of competent and confident Aboriginal Mental Health Workers. It includes those staff that provide on-the-job training and support and those who support the Training Program at the AHS and policy levels. Note that while names of positions may vary across AHSs, the primary function of positions in relation to the Traineeship is what is important. The roles and responsibilities of people associated with University Study and Support and Clinical Placements and Support are outlined in those chapters.

Mental Health Team Members

The Aboriginal Mental Health Worker Training Program is reliant on a range of key people, such as the Line Manager, Clinical Supervisor, Preceptor and Clinical Leader Aboriginal Mental Health, to provide day-to-day management, training and support of the Trainee.

Aboriginal Mental Health Worker Trainees are first and foremost employees of the Area Health Service and NSW Health. The workplace provides essential on-the-job training to enable Trainees to develop into skilled Aboriginal Mental Health Workers. The workplace provides opportunities to put the theory gained at university into practice and to consolidate clinical skills learned during clinical placements in a variety of clinical settings. Successful completion of academic requirements is a condition of ongoing employment within the Traineeship Program.

Aboriginal Mental Health Worker Trainees

Aboriginal Mental Health Worker Trainees are Aboriginal people who have gone through the recruitment process and demonstrated:

- knowledge and understanding of Aboriginal culture and the social and emotional issues experienced by people
- willingness and commitment to work effectively as part of a multidisciplinary team and deliver services to the whole of the community
- commitment to work as Aboriginal Mental Health Worker Trainees under supervision, with consumers and carers who have mental health and drug and alcohol issues

¹ Adapted from Watson, C and Harrison, N (2006). *Aboriginal Mental Health Worker Training Program Manual*, Cooperative Research Centre for Aboriginal Health, Darwin, pages 19-28. Updated in 2008 by V Crawford and T Sanders and in 2010 for this Practical Guide.

- written and oral communication skills to a standard to undertake and successfully complete a university degree course
- ability to organise and prioritise work and study activities
- willingness and commitment to undertake tertiary study that may include attending residential teaching blocks, completing clinical competency assessments, assignments, essays, examinations, worksheets and clinical and health promotion practicum placements under supervision

Trainees are responsible for:

- functioning effectively as members of a multidisciplinary team
- adhering to workplace policies and procedures and acting in a professional manner
- ensuring that meetings with Clinical Supervisors and Clinical Leaders take place regularly to discuss progress towards achieving workplace targets
- keeping diaries and other documentation up to date and presenting them to line managers/clinical leaders at performance review meetings
- organising travel and accommodation for university residential teaching blocks and placements and completing all required documentation
- identifying learning objectives after each university residential teaching block and communicating these to clinical supervisors and preceptors
- informing Line Managers and Clinical Supervisors of clinical placement objectives to assist identification and facilitation of clinical placements
- keeping a record of all activities completed
- actively participating in self assessment, workplace and placement reviews every three months in the first year and every six months in the second and third years (recommended time table)
- keeping up to date with university requirements in relation to assignments and placements
- meeting the workplace targets and university assignment deadlines
- ensuring workplace and clinical placement competencies are signed off when completed
- identifying potential tutors and following the procedure described in the section on University Study and Support

- signing an authority to release information about academic progress to Line Managers and providing them with a copy of an academic transcript when it becomes available

Line Manager

The Line Manager responsible for supervising the Trainees during their day-to-day work is the operational manager of the mental health team (usually the Team Leader or Team Manager). The Line Manager ensures that administrative and clinical supervision is provided to all mental health staff, including Trainees. The Line Manager is responsible for ensuring that all staff meet organisational requirements such as organisational goals, expectations and standards. The Line Manager may delegate responsibility for the day-to-day supervision of a Trainee. Depending on the size and the composition of the team, a line manager may also act as a preceptor and/or workplace clinical supervisor.

In relation to Trainees, the Line Manager is responsible for:

- ensuring Trainees receive a comprehensive orientation and induction program, including meeting mandatory training requirements
- ensuring Trainees are familiar with their responsibilities under relevant legislation; NSW Health Code of Conduct and Area Health Service's standards of practice
- organising education and training opportunities for Trainees and assisting in the identification of a suitable tutor if required
- identifying and nominating a senior clinician as a workplace Clinical Supervisor for each Trainee
- ensuring Trainees are assessed against competencies relevant to the workplace and for ensuring that workplace targets are set and assessed.
- meeting regularly with the Clinical Leader Aboriginal Mental Health to discuss Trainees' progress and support
- managing and reviewing Trainees' performance, including an annual performance appraisal/assessment
- ensuring Trainees are provided with a learning and development day per week for university study during each semester
- planning clinical placements with the Clinical Leader Aboriginal Mental Health and Trainees annually
- identifying the need for and organising cultural supervision/mentoring for Trainees in consultation with the Clinical Leader Aboriginal Mental Health

- providing nominated Clinical Supervisors and Preceptors with the time and resources to meet supervisory and training commitments to Trainees as well as undertake their own allocated mental health work
- developing and maintaining a safe cultural environment for Trainees
- embedding the Traineeship Program in service and team strategic plans
- developing and maintaining a team culture that actively embraces Trainees as full team members
- ensuring that data on all aspects of the Training Program are collected and recorded

Clinical Supervisor

The Clinical Supervisor is a senior clinician in the workplace who is responsible for overseeing the Trainee's clinical training. Formal clinical supervision, undertaken by all mental health staff including Trainees, is provided by senior clinicians trained as clinical supervisors. In some Area Health Services, consultant clinical supervisors provide clinical supervision on a visiting basis and/or via teleconferencing and videoconferencing. There is a policy and an established process for formal clinical supervision in each Area Health Service.

In relation to Trainees, the Clinical Supervisor is responsible for:

- planning the workplace training program with the Clinical Leader Aboriginal Mental Health and Trainees
- ensuring Trainees are placed with experienced workers from a range of disciplines who act as workplace based trainers (Preceptors), providing the on-the-job training
- ensuring Trainees acquire a thorough knowledge of professional conduct and ethics according to the NSW Health Code of Conduct
- liaising with Preceptors about the Trainees' progress
- checking that Trainees are meeting competencies as outlined in the university program
- checking that Trainees are meeting workplace targets and reviewing and assessing the development of the Trainees' competencies on-the-job
- developing a training plan to address identified gaps in the Trainees' competencies
- confirming successful completion of targets, tasks and competencies

Preceptor

The workplace trainer or Preceptor is an experienced mental health worker (more than two years of clinical experience as a mental health and/or drug and alcohol worker) who the Trainee works alongside. The Preceptor provides day-to-day training, clinical guidance and

support. It is expected that the Preceptor has demonstrated skills in training, supervision and provision of feedback. For mental health workers taking on the role of Preceptor who identify the need for additional skills development, there are preceptorship training courses available. Training can be organised through the Line Manager.

In relation to Trainees, Preceptors are responsible for:

- facilitating learning opportunities and providing one-to-one support
- modelling effective practice
- explaining and ensuring knowledge of systems and processes in mental health practice
- explaining and reinforcing confidentiality and privacy and the ethical nature of the work
- facilitating discussions about key concepts in mental health care, for example, roles and responsibilities of different team members and record keeping
- involving Trainees in all aspects of mental health work, commensurate with Trainees' level of competence
- observing Trainees in their practice and providing feedback
- ensuring the documentation of targets and competencies when met by Trainees

Area Health Service Aboriginal Mental Health Leadership Positions

Area Coordinator Aboriginal Mental Health

This position is responsible for the coordination, implementation and monitoring of Aboriginal Mental Health programs and initiatives across an Area Health Service in line with the *Social and Emotional Wellbeing Framework (2004-2009)*, *New South Wales Aboriginal Mental Health and Well Being Policy (2006-2010)* and the *National Strategic Framework for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health (2003-2013)*. There are currently Area Coordinator Aboriginal Mental Health positions in Greater Western Area Health Service, Hunter New England Area Health Service and Sydney South West Area Health Service.

Note: In other Area Health Services, different Area Coordinator positions are responsible for the implementation of the *New South Wales Aboriginal Mental Health and Well Being Policy (2006-2010)*.

In relation to the Training Program, the Area Coordinator Aboriginal Mental Health is responsible for:

- coordinating the implementation of the Aboriginal Mental Health Training Program across the Area Health Service
- providing advice, support and direction for the on-going implementation of the Program

- developing standards of practice for Aboriginal Mental Health Workers
- contributing to strategic planning for the Aboriginal Mental Health Workforce
- seeking opportunities to support and enhance the Program
- developing and maintaining partnerships with the Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services, universities and other relevant bodies as required including development and maintenance of protocols

Clinical Leader Aboriginal Mental Health

A principal role of the Clinical Leader Aboriginal Mental Health is to contribute to the development of the Aboriginal Mental Health Workforce Program within the Area Health Service and to inform the cultural competency of the general mental health workforce. The emphasis is on supporting the Trainees, their Line Managers, Supervisors and work colleagues in their roles in relation to the Training Program.

In relation to the Training Program, the Clinical Leader Aboriginal Mental Health is responsible for:

- providing Trainees with an introduction to the Training Program and the relationship between the workplace activities and university study
- liaising with Line Managers to ensure that Trainees are given opportunities for learning in the workplace
- developing an annual university clinical placement plan (and team rotation plan if relevant) in conjunction with the Line Manager and the Trainee and assisting with appraisals and performance management issues as requested
- liaising with Line Managers and Clinical Supervisors to ensure Trainees are satisfactorily meeting Traineeship requirements
- liaising with the university to assist in providing support to Trainees
- assisting Trainees to identify potential tutors and to complete required application forms
- promoting the Training Program to the community and encouraging Aboriginal people to apply for vacant positions
- providing cultural supervision to staff, in particular to Trainees, in relation to mental health care to Aboriginal consumers

Other Area Health Service Leadership and Support Positions

Director Mental Health Services

The Director Mental Health Services is responsible for all aspects of the development and delivery of mental health services across the Area Health Service. In some Area Health Services, the Director is responsible for mental health and drug and alcohol services, either as separate services or as an integrated service.

In relation to the Training Program, the Director of Mental Health Services is responsible for:

- advocating for the Program within the Area Health Service and NSW Health
- providing policy support for the Program
- ensuring the Program is implemented as designed and supporting the Area Health Service position responsible for the on-going implementation of the Program
- ensuring funds are spent according to the funding allocation and ensuring ongoing funding support
- providing reports to the Mental Health and Drug and Alcohol Office on aspects of the Program as requested
- liaising with and supporting the State-wide Coordinator, Aboriginal Mental Health Workforce Program and Aboriginal mental health coordinators and managers, in relation to the Training Program and to the broader development of the Aboriginal mental health workforce
- creating opportunities for expansion of the Program

Mental Health Services Cluster/Sector/Service Manager

In relation to the Training Program, the Mental Health Services Cluster/Sector/Service Manager is responsible for:

- preparing mental health services for the Program by providing the context, significance, details of implementation and expectations of staff
- facilitating regular discussion across the organisation about the ongoing development of the Program
- supporting the Clinical Leader Aboriginal Mental Health
- consulting with Line Managers about the practical implementation of the Program, including mental health teams' capacity to develop and support Trainees.

- ensuring the implementation of performance development and reviews of Trainees by Line Managers
- reporting on progress to the Director Mental Health Services and to the Mental Health and Drug and Alcohol Office as requested

State-wide Aboriginal Leadership Position

State-wide Coordinator Aboriginal Mental Health Workforce Program

The State-wide Coordinator is responsible for leading the development, management, monitoring and evaluation of the Aboriginal Mental Health Workforce Program, including the Aboriginal Mental Health Worker Training Program (AMHWTP). The State-wide Coordinator has a strategic role in partnership building and improving the strategic and operational management of mental health services across NSW with regard to recruiting, training and supporting Aboriginal mental health staff. The Coordinator reports on strategic and policy matters to the Director, Mental Health and Drug & Alcohol Office, NSW Health. The position is located in Greater Western Area Health Service (GWAHS) at Orange and reports operationally to the Director Mental Health Services.

In relation to the Training Program, the State-wide Coordinator has specific responsibilities for:

- advising the Mental Health and Drug and Alcohol Office on policy matters and issues emerging in the ongoing development and implementation of the Training Program
- establishing and building relationships with education providers to explore opportunities for the development of options for the university study component of the Traineeship and educational pathways for Trainees
- facilitating and providing secretariat support for the State-wide Reference Group responsible for Training Program implementation
- building relationships across the State to promote the development and implementation of the Training Program
- developing a consistent approach across NSW Health with regard to Training Program implementation
- assisting Area Health Service staff to implement the Training Program, consistent with agreed principles and approaches
- liaising with and supporting Area Health Service staff on issues related to the Training Program
- visiting each AHS at least twice a year to discuss matters regarding progress on implementation and to offer support to the services employing Trainees

- guiding the monitoring and evaluation of the Training Program
- engaging with and supporting the Aboriginal Mental Health leadership across Area Health Services

NSW Health Mental Health and Drug and Alcohol Office (MHDAO)²

The MHDAO has responsibility for overseeing the development and implementation of the Aboriginal Mental Health Workforce Program. The *NSW Aboriginal Mental Health and Well Being Policy 2006-2010* identifies the Aboriginal Mental Health Workforce as a key area that requires strengthening.

The establishment of the Aboriginal Mental Health Workforce Program therefore aims to build an Aboriginal Mental Health Workforce across New South Wales which is capable of supporting the mental health and well being needs of Aboriginal communities throughout the State. There are three components of the Program:

- Aboriginal Mental Health Workforce Training Program involves training Aboriginal Mental Health Workers as described in this Guide
- Aboriginal Clinical Leadership Program involves the establishment of Clinical Leader Aboriginal Mental Health positions in key Area Health Services. These positions play a vital role in supporting the rapidly emerging Aboriginal mental health workforce. Another important role they play is to promote service utilisation by Aboriginal people, and assist services to provide culturally appropriate care to Aboriginal communities.
- Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services (ACCHS) involves the funding and support for this important NGO sector. In recognition that Aboriginal people need and access mental health services through ACCHSs, funding is provided to this sector as part of the Aboriginal Mental Health Workforce Program. NSW Health funds the Aboriginal Health and Medical Research Council (AH&MRC) to employ a State-wide Coordinator for Aboriginal Mental Health in the ACCHS sector. This position advises NSW Health and represents the AH&MRC and the NSW Aboriginal Health Partnership on issues related to mental health and the social and emotional well being of Aboriginal people in NSW. NSW Health also provides funding to ACCHSs to employ Aboriginal Mental Health Workers. As of June 2009, 24 funded Aboriginal Mental Health Worker positions have been established across NSW in a total of 17 ACCHS organisations.

MHDAO provides funding and support for the annual Aboriginal Mental Health Workers Forum. It provides an opportunity for Aboriginal Mental Health Workers across the State to engage in professional development activities. It facilitates the development of support networks across the government and non-government workforce.

² Information sourced from http://www.health.nsw.gov.au/mhdao/workforce_development.asp