

Clearer Training Pathways Ahead

Training Calendar

To assist you with planning and accessing training for the current quarter we have developed the attached training calendar in a poster version showing available training and education options.

MHCC is working to build a comprehensive, clear and relevant set of training and education options for workers in NGOs providing mental health services. This will help to ensure the sector is well equipped to meet future challenges including the growth of the sector and increased demands for professionalism, efficiency and accountability.

The NGO mental health sector is facing expansion as a result of new initiatives such as the Housing Assistance and Support Initiative (HASI) program. It is therefore vital for the viability of future NGO initiatives that the sector is able to attract and retain suitably qualified workers.

We are aiming to provide training and education to meet the needs of all workers in the sector, including volunteers and paid workers, those with tertiary qualifications and non qualified workers, those providing frontline services, their managers, support staff, boards and committees of management and others working in the sector. We shall also ensure that training is available for consumers who wish to become mental health workers and for workers providing services to consumers with diverse needs and backgrounds including people:

- from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds
- with an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander heritage
- from rural, regional and remote areas
- who identify as gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender
- of all ages
- facing financial hardship
- who are homeless or in danger of becoming homeless
- who are, or have been, in detention or prison
- with an additional diagnosis such as substance abuse or an intellectual or physical disability

As well as addressing the needs of workers in NGOs specialising in mental health, we will also ensure there is adequate training for workers in generalist NGOs who have clients with mental illness.

The NGO mental health sector is very diverse, providing services such as supported residential care, employment support, telephone support, respite, outreach, carer and consumer support groups, club houses, drop in centres, counselling and advocacy, education and information provision. The diversity of the sector needs to be accommodated in training provision. There are some core skills that all workers require. These are skills in community based mental health care, also known as psychosocial rehabilitation. They involve assisting those with mental illness to live a fulfilling life within their community. However, there is also a need for specialised training, such as that required for work with particular conditions and population groups or to undertake specific treatment approaches. Furthermore training needs to accommodate the diverse educational backgrounds of workers, their geographic spread from metropolitan to rural and remote areas, the differing career paths that workers choose to follow and the often limited ability of services and workers to pay for training and education.

Presently there is a wide variety of training available for mental health NGO workers; however, there is no planning in the spread of training and this results in inconsistency in training availability, relevance, quality and cost. MHCC plans to address this problem by ensuring there is a comprehensive array of relevant and accessible training. We will be working to ensure that training will be accessible in terms of cost, location and timing. We are forming a Workforce Development Reference Group to assist us in determining the needs of the sector. The Reference Group will work with MHCC to undertake a comprehensive training needs analysis for the sector. This will complement information gained through our earlier consultations and research. The information will be used to help design new courses in areas of unmet need and to improve the relevance, quality and accessibility of existing courses.

To ensure appropriate training and education for the sector MHCC is working to develop the following initiatives:

- A voluntary minimum standard of training for workers within the sector
- A traineeship for new and existing workers
- A variety of short training courses on topics of direct relevance to workers in the sector, including areas of specialisation
- A range of new accredited courses providing nationally recognised qualifications relevant to the sector
- Introductory and intermediate courses in mental health for workers new to the field of mental health, those wishing to refresh their skills and for workers in other sectors who have clients with a mental illness
- Post graduate qualifications in relevant areas
- A series of information and training resources to assist learning
- A training calendar updated and distributed quarterly, available both as a hard copy poster and a web based resource, outlining relevant training, conferences and seminars and how to access them

- Research and dissemination of information about best practice in the areas of service provided by NGOs and how this can be implemented within the workplace
- Pathways for consumers to enter the NGO mental health workforce

To do this the MHCC is embarking on five main approaches.

1. We are forming our own training service, and will become a Registered Training Organisation (RTO), enabling us to develop and provide accredited training to the sector. We will also be offering non accredited training in a wide array of subject areas.
2. We will be forming partnerships with other education and training providers, so as to encourage and assist others to provide relevant training.
3. We will also be working to encourage research into best practice for services provided by the sector and will provide information and education about how these can be implemented in the workplace.
4. We will be working with the NSW Community Services and Health Industry Training Advisory Board (ITAB) and representatives from the NGO Mental Health sector so as to influence the development of the new Training Package for Mental Health (Non-clinical). This will effect the content of the Certificate IV in Mental Health (Non-clinical), the Traineeship we are developing which is based on this qualification, the voluntary minimum standard of training which will be formed by core units from this qualification and Statements of Attainment issued for completion of units from the Certificate.
5. We will be working with a variety of stakeholders to plan training and education for the sector, ensuring that it is of a high quality, relevant and accessible.

As a result of these initiatives we aim to provide workers in the sector with clear career and education pathways, increased job satisfaction and attractive career options, thereby enhancing recruitment and retention of staff within the sector. This comprehensive approach to training and education will also ensure a uniform high level of service provision across the sector and broad recognition of the role and quality of services provided by the NGO mental health sector in NSW.

The attached training calendar showing current training and education options will also be available on the MHCC website, where you can link directly to each of the training providers. If you know of other training which you think should be included in our calendar, or have other suggestions about its content, please let us know.

To make suggestions about the content of our calendar, to let us know about training you would like to see developed, or for more information, please contact: Heidi Freeman, NGO Development Officer,

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