

CMHDARN COMMUNITY RESEARCH MENTORING PROGRAM

INFORMATION FOR APPLICANTS

WOULD YOU LIKE SUPPORT TO DEVELOP A RESEARCH PROJECT?
WOULD YOU LIKE TO DEVELOP NEW RESEARCH SKILLS?

Background

The Community Mental Health Drug and Alcohol Research Network (CMHDARN) was established in 2010 to broaden involvement of the community mental health and alcohol and other drugs sectors in practice-based research and to promote the value of research and the translation of research evidence into practice. Its overall aim is to improve the quality of service delivery and correspondingly, the outcomes for consumers / clients of community managed services, their families and carers.

Aims of the Community Research Mentoring Program

Provide members of MHCC and NADA who have an interest in research, with mentoring support from academics to foster research knowledge and skill development. Including:

- Facilitating an increase in worker confidence, knowledge and skills in the area of research and evaluation and further developing a research culture within community managed organisations
- Equipping staff with the skills and resources to ask the questions they want to know about impact, outcomes and research processes
- Providing mentors the opportunity to enhance their understanding of community managed organisations and the specific operational issues which may impact on conducting and implementing research

Program eligibility guidelines

Applicants must:

- be based in NSW;
- be working for an organisation that is a current member of either MHCC and/or NADA; and
- demonstrate evidence of organisational support and capacity, including manager (or equivalent) sign-off.

Although applicants do not need to have identified a specific research project, they should at least have a research concept in mind and research-skills that they have identified to enhance or a topic they would like to develop over the course of the mentorship program.

Program details

The Community Research Mentoring Program provides opportunities for MHCC and/or NADA member organisations to develop, conduct and support research projects. Conducting research within service delivery organisations creates spaces for reflective practice and can show what the service is achieving or where there is room for improvement. This program equips staff with the skills and resources to ask the questions they want to know about impact, outcomes and research processes.

Examples of Previous Mentoring Projects / Topics and things the mentee might want to explore

- Guidance on how to conduct a literature search
- Advice regarding the sort of procedures and measures to include in an evaluation of a service
- Statistical advice to assist with the analysis of data collected by a service
- Advice regarding the development and set up of a qualitative study to be conducted within a service
- Development and feedback of resources
- Developing research question/s

Mentoring can include all or some of the following:

- Face-to-face, phone, video conferencing and/or email communication
- Feedback on documents relating to research
- Provision or development of relevant resources
- Onsite support for mentee and colleagues (e.g. facilitation of group activity)
- Linking to relevant processes (e.g. ethics approval processes)
- Receiving feedback from people with lived experience about the research proposed

Time commitment

Mentees should be aware that progressing the agreed upon research goals is likely to require a significant time commitment outside of their mentoring meetings. Mentees will need to allow at least 4-5 hours in preparation for every hour you spend with your mentor.

Please note: the mentor is ***not*** a substitute for existing supervisory arrangements.

This program offers a staged approach to mentoring:

- Short term mentoring will be the first step (a period of 6 months). This will allow the parties to work together to assess the relevant research issues. The mentee who has a question / issue to be explored will be linked with an academic (postdoctoral or otherwise) who has some level of related interest and expertise. After the initial 6 months, the mentee / mentor can then decide if they want the relationship to be extended further or if the interaction has met the needs of the mentee and their organisation at the end of the initial agreement.

A short-term mentoring agreement must be developed by the mentee and mentor within two weeks after an initial meeting. This agreement sets up expectations including:

- Duration of the mentoring relationship
- Frequency and duration of meetings
- Time commitment outside of meetings
- Periods of limited availability
- Research goals including their feasibility within the duration of this mentoring relationship.

- Longer term mentoring is valuable in building stronger relationships / linkages between academics and workers. Long-term mentoring is available for six – twelve-months after the initial short-term mentoring agreement has been conducted.

The Mentor supports the mentee to:

- Draw upon the mentee's existing experience and knowledge to create a clear and reasonable course of action and plan for the proposed research
- Clarify and set goals and objectives
- Develop an action strategy that meets the mentee's specific objectives
- Be accountable to what they have agreed to do
- Create a long-term plan for what can be accomplished
- Complete an application the CMHDARN RECC for ethical guidance, at an appropriate time
- Shift perspectives to new possibilities if needed

The Mentee has responsibility for:

- Setting and organising meeting times
- Committing to and taking the mentoring relationship seriously
- Respecting the mentor's availability and time
- Being receptive to information and feedback
- Setting realistic expectations with the mentor

Research Ethics Consultation Committee (RECC)

As part of the mentoring process, mentees will be required to seek guidance from CMHDARN's RECC. This guidance will support mentees to consider the ethical implications of their research in the MH and AOD sectors and can include reviews of project proposals / methodologies / data collection tools and confidentiality processes. Mentees can apply to the RECC anytime throughout their mentoring term; however, they must apply before conducting their research (if this is the aim of the mentoring project) and before the end of their mentoring agreement.

Please note: Exemption to applications to the RECC can be sought from the CMHDARN Coordinator, if the mentoring project is not at a stage at the end of the mentoring agreement where it can benefit from undertaking the RECC process.

Contact with CMHDARN Coordinator

Throughout the mentoring period, the mentee is expected to have regular contact with the CMHDARN Coordinator, either by email or face-to-face. This is to ensure that the program is meeting the needs of the mentee.

Conflicts

In the event of conflict, both parties should aim to address issues during the program, as they arise. In the event that this is not possible or the issues remain unresolved and/or require escalation, mentors should contact their supervisor and mentees should contact the CMHDARN Coordinator.

Ending the Mentoring Relationship

The initial mentoring relationship will come to an end once the duration specified in the 'Short-term Mentoring Agreement' has been reached. If the mentee / mentor wishes to continue this relationship, a new agreement will need to be signed.

If the mentor or mentee needs to withdraw from the program at any time before the end of the program, they must speak with the mentor/mentee and their relevant contact people.

At the end of the mentoring relationship both mentors and mentees will be required to participate in an evaluation of the CMHDARN Community Research Mentoring Program.

Application Process

Applications can be submitted at any time.

Please fill out the “CMHDARN Community Research Mentoring Program - Application form” and submit to info@cmhdaresearchnetwork.com.au

Once an application has been received and the applicant meets the criteria for inclusion in the program, the CMHDARN Coordinator will liaise with the relevant mentoring coordinator to connect the applicant with a mentor. This process will take approximately four weeks.

As the applicant will be matched with a mentor who has similar research interests, in some cases a mentor will not be available to start immediately, this will be communicated to the mentee.

Once a suitable mentor has been engaged, the CMHDARN Coordinator will connect the applicant / mentee with the mentor. A short-term mentoring agreement will then be developed and signed by both parties.