

Organisational implementation guide

Key Outcome Area 2

Safety and quality



Safety and quality practices underpin all activities undertaken by mental health services. They exist to provide clear, evidence-based pathways for staff to follow to ensure the best quality of care for all consumers. Governance for safety and quality provide mechanisms to safeguard high standards of health care through continual improvement.

Governance frameworks include processes to ensure:

- High standards of clinical performance and clinical audits
- High standards of risk management
- Ongoing professional development
- Well-developed procedures to manage adverse events.

All health services, including mental health services, are guided by standards such as the *National Safety and Quality Health Service (NSQHS) Standards (2012)* which was developed by the Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care (ACSQHC). These standards are routinely assessed through accreditation cycles. Mental health services are, in addition, guided by the *National Standards for Mental Health Services (NSMHS) (2010)*. These are also designed to be assessed along with the NSQHSS through regular accreditation cycles.

Standard 4 of the NSMHS (2010) focuses specifically on 'Diversity Responsiveness', however, the Framework considers all safety and quality governance mechanisms apply to all of Australia's multicultural population. Mental health services, for example, should be equally accessible to all members of the Australian community, including those from CALD backgrounds. The safety and quality of these services should be of the same high standard for everyone. To ensure this, services must be culturally and linguistically responsive to the population at all levels of service provision.

Culturally inclusive safety and quality practices require a multifaceted approach that recognises the need for:

- Transcultural specialist services for primary and secondary consultation, utilising bicultural specialists and cultural consultants
- A culturally responsive workforce that is equipped with the knowledge and skills to work across languages with the assistance of skilled mental health interpreters.

This population health-based approach requires culturally inclusive safety and quality practices to provide staff with appropriate guidelines and support.

Sound safety and quality controls, such as the NSQHS Standards (2012) and the NSMHS (2010):

- Enable consumers to participate meaningfully in the provision of their own care, and also at the service delivery level
- Provide a clear understanding of a consumer's rights and ways to express their concerns, complaints or grievances
- Allow for the availability of translated information, as well as verbal explanations, in a way that is understood by the consumer and family carers.

The Framework advocates that in multicultural Australia, safety and quality practices should be culturally inclusive for all population groups, and that cultural responsiveness should be integrated rather than be seen as an add-on. The challenges of sound safety and quality practices are whether they can be applied equally to all Australians irrespective of language or cultural backgrounds.