

Directive: compliance is mandatory

Specialist Outpatient Services

Objective file number: eA523220
Policy developed by: Health System Performance
Approved at Portfolio Executive on: 6 September 2012
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Summary To provide equity of access to Outpatient Services across Health Networks.

Keywords Outpatients, Specialist Access, Patient Journey, Patient Care, Models of Care, Directive

Policy history Is this a new policy? **Y**
Does this policy amend or update an existing policy? **N**
Does this policy replace an existing policy? **N**
If so, which policies?

Applies to All SA Health Portfolio
All Department for Health and Ageing Divisions
Metropolitan Local Health Networks

Staff impact All Staff, Management, Admin, Students; Volunteers
All Clinical, Medical, Nursing, Allied Health, Emergency, Mental Health, Pathology.

PDS reference D0277

Version control and change history

Version	Date from	Date to	Amendment
1.0	06/09/2012	current	Original version



1. Purpose/Background

Purpose

The policy outlines the principles by which SA Health will deliver 'Specialist Outpatient Services' to ensure appropriate and equitable access for South Australians consistent with the principles set out in South Australia's Health Care Plan 2007-2016.

This policy underpins timely access to Outpatient Services irrespective of the nature of the service or where the service is delivered – whether in a hospital or community setting. It should be noted that due to the different service models in place in country locations implementation of this Directive and associated guidelines will occur as appropriate at country sites.

Background

Outpatient Services involve the provision of scheduled Medical, Surgical, Nursing and Allied Health services or a combination of services, to non-admitted patients and therefore is related to services that could potentially be provided in a community setting.

The majority of outpatient services are provided to patients who are not admitted to hospital, and therefore, relate to services that can be provided in the community in a timely manner.

To ensure public hospital resources are focused to improve outcomes for patients requiring an acute hospital attendance, care planning should take into consideration flexible care and treatment options by maximising the capability and capacity of the primary care sector.

Reform

Currently, the key strategies comprising the SA Health Outpatient Reform Strategy can be separated into the following three broad categories, as follows:

- Improving accessibility by ensuring that links between General Practitioners, Specialists and Allied Health are strengthened to avoid long waits at public hospital outpatient clinics for conditions that may be better provided in a community setting. This will improve capacity in public hospitals for the management of tertiary type outpatient services to ensure the best outcome for the patient.
- Implementing new models of care such as new roles for nurses and allied health and the use of improved clinical protocols/care pathways that involve the General Practitioner as the centre of care provision between the patient and specialist.
- Promoting sustainable services by ensuring cost effectiveness and efficiency of services provided in all public hospitals and publicly funded community locations throughout South Australia.

The 'Specialist Outpatient Services' model will:

- Facilitate timely access to health services and improve the patient journey across the continuum of care;
- Support the delivery of a standardised approach to care, which has the patient at its centre;
- Ensure that patients receive the right care in the right place and at the right time, including the use of community based health services that are delivered closer to where people live (e.g. GP Plus, Super Clinics, General Practitioners and Specialist Services);
- Improve capacity and demand management;
- Support the development and integration of a multi-disciplinary skilled and flexible workforce.
- Ensure that the outcomes of the reform process can be measured and reported.

Commitment to continuous improvement

SA Health is committed to continuous improvement in the provision of services and the management of patient care.

It is also important to note that SA Health is committed to ensuring that models of care and service responses are continually evaluated and refined to ensure that as a system we are able to respond to changes. Therefore, while this policy provides the current direction, as further information or best practice evidence is supported by SA Health (e.g. enhancement of the Model of Care for Major Hospitals) then guidelines will be updated accordingly.

This policy overarches services for Outpatients and our capacity to manage demand and change, through a holistic approach to 'Specialist Outpatient Services.'

2. Scope

The Specialist Outpatient Services Access Policy and associated guidelines relates to all Outpatient Services provided in publicly funded hospitals and community locations across South Australia.

3. Directive Principles

The 'Specialist Outpatient Services' Policy is underpinned by the following primary principles:

Community needs – System is designed to meet the health needs of patients, their families and the community.

Whole of system approach – Supports an integrated approach to the promotion of healthy lifestyles, prevention of illness and injury and diagnosis and treatment of illness across the continuum of care.

Preventative approach – Focus on the prevention of disease and injury and the maintenance of health as distinct from simply focussing on the treatment of illness.

Engaging Clinicians – Clinician engagement is vital in ensuring that an initiative is viable, responsive and effective.

Improve timely and equitable access – Strategy aims to reduce wait times in regards to access to service and ensures accessibility to all who require the service regardless of place of residence.

Culturally Respectful – Ensure the service is responsive to the cultural needs of Aboriginal people and people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

4. Directive Detail

This directive aims to ensure a consistent and complete approach to the provision of access for Outpatient Services through:

- Consideration of service, timeliness and locality (Quantitative)
- Consideration of the patient journey (Qualitative)
- Consideration of improved management processes, systems governance and outcomes (Performance Monitoring)

The following framework for service delivery underpins this holistic and patient-centred approach.

4.1 Access to Outpatient Services

Equity and consistency of access will be based on:

- Standard specialist clinic access and referral protocols
- Specialist Outpatient Services that focus on the needs of the patient
- Patient focussed booking systems
- Defined service waiting time for consultation by patient type
- Specialist Outpatient Services that ensure effective communication
- Standard discharge protocols

- State-wide directory of services (showing the mix of services available across the sites)

4.2 Implementing new models of care

Commitment to ensure the pursuit of exemplar patient care through:

- Use of new and proven models of care
- Use of flexible service models that can deliver the best patient outcomes, consistently
- Supporting the empowerment of the patient at the centre of the care plan
- Use of exemplar and consistent communication mechanisms for all health stakeholders

4.3 Promoting sustainable services

Support the delivery of sustainable Outpatient Services through:

- Standardised approach to the provision of outpatient services with:
 - Consideration of demand management
 - The use of flexible service models that can deliver best practice and efficient service delivery
 - Greater use of community options such as GP Practice, GP Plus Centres and Allied Health Services
 - The use of flexible workforce strategies to underpin responsiveness, consistency and coverage across the system
 - The service model reflecting value for money and is more cost effective than existing models. This can be achieved by:
 - Improving governance
 - Awareness of changing trends when planning for outpatient services
 - Reducing waste and duplication
- Recognition of the pursuit of excellence in service and patient care
- Recognition of the importance of education and communication that is necessary to support models of care.

4.4 Performance Monitoring

Support continuous evaluation with respect to the delivery of Outpatient Services, through:

- Standardised approach to the collection and reporting of outpatient data
- Recognition of the importance of continuous data quality activities
- Maximisation of compliance with Medicare Billing for Private Non-admitted Patients in SA Health Outpatient Clinics Policy Directive
- Ongoing performance monitoring and service evaluation to meet changes in demand for service

5. Responsibility

5.1 Chief Executive – SA Health

- Sets overall policy on health and social care matters.
- Reports to the Minister on the progress of the SA Health Outpatient Reform.

5.2 Executive Director – Health System Performance

- Ensures a consistent approach to the implementation of the Specialist Outpatient Services policy.
- Develop the SA Health Outpatient Reform Strategy.
- Develop and monitor in collaboration with Local Health Networks the SA Health Outpatient Services policy and associated guidelines.
- Develop an agreed methodology and template to support any strategy or funding submissions by Health Networks about their proposed approach to local outpatient service reform. Assess proposals from Local Health Networks.
- Monitor performance of Outpatient Services
- Evaluate the initiatives impact from a statewide level.

5.3 Chief Executive Officers (Local Health Networks)

- Provide strategic leadership, workforce and organisational development to ensure local health systems deliver effective health services by:
 - f* Managing the provision of specialist outpatient services within the allocated budget.
 - f* Ensure health services have implemented systems in accordance with SA Health Directives and associated guidelines.
 - f* Ensure health services are resourced to successfully support this policy.
 - f* Ensure effective and timely implementation in relation to agreed initiatives.
 - f* Ensure effective and timely reporting in relation to agreed initiatives.
 - f* Implement and manage organisational change at the local level through the use of local change champions and other mechanisms.
 - f* Develop a Health Network Stakeholder Engagement Plan

5.4 Executive Directors, Directors and other senior managers

- Provide organisational governance and leadership in relation to approved strategies and initiatives

6. Definitions

Outpatient Services are planned non-admitted specialist services within an acute or community setting to ensure the best outcome for a patient.

7. Evaluation

Measurement of 'Specialist Outpatient Services' performance will be based on:

- 100% of referrals to specialist Outpatient Services adhere to established guidelines and standards.
- 100% of receipt of referrals are entered into the Patient Administration System
- 100% of patient bookings for outpatient services are entered into the Patient Administration System

- 100% of patients are seen within the agreed clinical urgency category
- 100% compliance with patient focused booking principles
- Improved models of care will be measured as follows:
 - f* Reduction in the number of patients seen in an acute setting
 - f* Discharge rates
 - f* Reduction in the number of Review appointments for outpatient services
 - f* Evidence of the development of patient pathways and protocols for care in a non-acute setting
- Improved administrative management will be measured as follows:
 - f* Continual decrease in the number of cancellations relating to patient generated appointments.
 - f* Continual reduction in appointment cancellation rates by hospital/clinicians.
 - f* Continual reduction in 'did not attend' rates.
 - f* Improvement in the new to review ratio of appointments.
 - f* Improvement in attendance rates
 - f* Improvement in discharge rates
- Increase in the volume of payments revenue to SA Health from clinicians utilising the Medicare Billing for Private Non-admitted Patients.

8. Risks

This policy is designed to overarch service delivery and ongoing management. This will include safety and quality as a key responsibility, and therefore, will mitigate its primary operational risks.

Risks arising from transformation will be managed by a change management program that will address transformation, stakeholder engagement and education, and will be part of an ongoing operation framework.

9. Associated Directives or Guidelines

- Referral to Specialist Outpatient Services Guideline.
- Emergency Department Referrals to Specialist Outpatient Services Guideline.
- Active Discharge from Specialist Outpatient Services Guideline.
- Patient Focused Booking System Guideline.
- Medicare Billing for Private Non-admitted Patients in SA Health Outpatient Clinics Policy Directive.

10. References

- SA Health Outpatient Reform Strategy
- SA Health Reform – Models of Care System Transformation
- Western Australia Health Outpatient Reform
- Specialist Clinics in Victorian Public Hospitals, Victoria Health Department
- Outpatient Services in South Australia – Current State Analysis and Recommendations – November 2009, PSPC Productivity and Performance Action Team.