



# South Australia's Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy

2010 - 2015



**Government  
of South Australia**

SA Health



## Foreword

Good mental health and wellbeing makes a vital contribution to the overall health and wellbeing of individuals and our communities and influences social and economic outcomes for South Australians of all ages and cultural backgrounds.

The Government of South Australia is committed to helping all South Australians achieve the best possible mental health by not only providing the best available mental health care services, but by actively promoting good mental health and wellbeing in the community and supporting people who experience mental ill-health towards recovery.

*South Australia's Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy* provides a framework for the promotion of good mental health and wellbeing in our community and the ongoing reform of our mental health care system. The policy supports

South Australia's Strategic Plan Target 2.7 to improve psychological wellbeing and builds on the significant investment made by the Government of South Australia to implement the strategic reforms set out in *Stepping Up: A Social Inclusion Plan for Mental Health Reform 2007-2012* (2007) and the *Review of Community Mental Health Services in South Australia* (2008).

*South Australia's Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy* also recognises the importance of a whole of community approach to mental health and wellbeing and represents a commitment to a co-ordinated approach to the provision of mental health care and the promotion of good mental health and wellbeing in South Australia. This includes a commitment to the ongoing development of partnerships with government and non-government sector organisations, consumers, carers and the general community to promote positive mental health and provide the best possible mental health care for all South Australians.

I hope that all South Australians will support the directions set out in this policy and continue to contribute to the whole of community effort to promote good mental health and wellbeing in South Australia.

**Dr Tony Sherbon**  
Chief Executive  
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## 1. Overview

Mental illness affects men, women and children of all ages and cultural backgrounds, affecting the lives of many people in our community, their families and friends. In Australia, one in five people will experience a mental health problem or illness each year and 45% of people will experience a mental health problem or illness at some point during their lifetime.<sup>1</sup> This includes the experience of short term anxiety and depression, substance use disorders and longer term conditions such as anxiety disorders, chronic depression and schizophrenia.

The impacts of poor mental health on individuals, carers, families and the wider community can be significant. Lost productivity due to poor health and unemployment, including the time given by carers who provide support for loved ones affected by mental illness, as well as exclusion from other opportunities for community participation and development due to illness can also have a significant social and economic cost.

*South Australia's Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy* acknowledges the challenges for individuals, families and communities posed by the experience of mental ill-health and aims to provide a vision for both the provision of the best possible system of mental health care in South Australia and the promotion of good mental health and wellbeing in the community. The policy embraces a number of key policy directions aimed at improving South Australia's mental health care system, promoting positive mental health and supporting the recovery process for everyone who experiences mental ill-health.

*South Australia's Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy* also recognises that good mental health and wellbeing depends on a wide range of factors and that a holistic, whole of community approach is essential to prevent and reduce the impacts of mental illness and help people who are experiencing mental ill-health achieve their recovery goals. As a result, the policy emphasises the importance of promoting and developing environments, relationships and services that enhance our individual and collective capacity to promote and sustain good mental health and facilitate the recovery journey for everyone who experiences mental ill-health. The development of this policy is based on an understanding that feeling positive about life and being able to deal with the challenges and difficulties we face is important to everyone in our community.

The implementation of this policy will be supported by the development of more detailed strategies, plans and frameworks aimed at promoting positive mental health and progressing mental health care reform in South Australia.

## 2. Strategic context

*South Australia's Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy* builds on the strategic reforms and developments outlined in *Stepping Up: A Social Inclusion Plan for Mental Health Reform 2007-2012* and the *Review of Community Mental Health Services in South Australia* (2008). The policy aligns with the key strategic objective of the *SA Health Strategic Plan* to reform mental health care in South Australia and target 2.7 of *South Australia's Strategic Plan* to improve psychological wellbeing in South Australia.

*South Australia's Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy* is also consistent with the directions of the National Mental Health Strategy, including the *National Mental Health Policy 2009 – 2014* and the *Fourth National Mental Health Plan: an agenda for collaborative government action in mental health 2009 – 2014*.

## 3. Vision

Our vision is for South Australia to be a strong, inclusive community that provides all South Australians with the knowledge, resources and opportunities necessary to maintain good mental health and wellbeing and for a mental health care system that supports people with a mental illness towards recovery by providing access to the best possible mental health care.

<sup>1</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics (2008) *National Survey of Mental Health and Wellbeing: Summary of Results* available at <http://www.abs.gov.au>

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## 4. Objectives

Our objectives are to:

- 4.1 Promote positive mental health and wellbeing in South Australia and prevent mental ill-health as far as possible.
- 4.2 Protect the human rights of people with a mental illness and support people who experience mental ill-health to live fulfilling lives in our community, without stigma or discrimination.
- 4.3 Prioritise early intervention and facilitate timely access to a range of high quality, integrated mental health services that are culturally respectful and meet the needs of South Australians regardless of age, disability, cultural background, geographical location or circumstances of life.
- 4.4 Promote and implement principles and strategies that support recovery across the mental health care system and the general community.

## 5. Principles

The following principles will underpin each of the strategic directions outlined in this policy:

### 5.1 Every South Australian has rights

South Australians who engage with the mental health care system will have their individual rights respected.

### 5.2 Mental health care is focussed on recovery

The goal of mental health care is to promote recovery and achieve full citizenship for everyone who experiences mental ill-health.

### 5.3 Mental health care is consumer-centred and culturally appropriate

Each mental health consumer is a unique individual with his or her own physical, social, emotional, cultural and spiritual dimension and will receive care that is respectful, culturally appropriate and tailored to his or her individual needs.

### 5.4 Participation and social inclusion promote positive mental health

A whole of community, whole of government approach that promotes social inclusion and participation in community life will promote positive mental health.

### 5.5 Early in life, early in illness, early in episode

Prevention and early intervention will be prioritised in all areas of health promotion and service delivery to build resilience, prevent the onset of illness and reduce the severity and duration of illness when it is experienced.

### 5.6 Consumer and carer participation is valued at all levels

Consumers and carers should be involved at all levels of policy, planning, service development and evaluation to set directions and to ensure the best possible health outcomes.

### 5.7 Mental health care is accessible, evidence-based and meets the highest possible standards of safety and quality

Safe, high quality mental health care based on evidence-based best practice will be accessible to all South Australians regardless of age, gender, cultural background or geographical location.

### 5.8 Resources for mental health must be used wisely

Resources and funding allocated for mental health care in government and non-government organisations must be spent wisely and allocated according to clearly defined priorities.

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## Recovery

### *What do we mean by 'recovery'?*

The concept of recovery describes a person's own unique and personal journey to create a fulfilling, hopeful and contributing life and achieve his or her own aspirations, despite the difficulties or limitations that can result from the experience of mental illness. It does not necessarily mean the elimination of symptoms or a return to a person's pre-illness state.

This approach to recovery emphasises that everyone who experiences mental illness, including those seriously affected by mental illness, can achieve an improved level of wellbeing and a renewed sense of identity, purpose and meaning in life in the presence or absence of symptoms of illness.

### *Recovery in practice*

Each person will experience the recovery process differently and have different recovery goals. While recovery can be understood as an overall process of positive personal growth, this process may be lengthy and complex, involving periods of growth, setbacks and relapses.

Families, friends, community members, mental health and other community services can all play an important role in encouraging and supporting a person's individual recovery journey. In the service delivery context, the recovery approach requires mental health services to actively engage in a flexible partnership with people experiencing mental illness, their families and carers, to encourage and empower a person to facilitate their own recovery.

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## 6. Policy directions

### 6.1 Rights and responsibilities

#### Protecting human rights and promoting responsibilities

Everyone has the right to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of mental health.<sup>2</sup> In South Australia, the achievement of the best possible mental health for all South Australians will be supported by a mental health care system that respects the inherent dignity and freedoms of each individual. South Australia's mental health care system will protect consumer and carer rights to information about treatment, facilitate participation in decision-making about health care, encourage access to advocacy and support and provide for equality of access to health care as far as possible.

Many people with serious mental health problems and mental illnesses face stigma, discrimination and social exclusion. Stigma, discrimination and social exclusion must be challenged to ensure that people who experience mental ill-health can enjoy fulfilling lives in a community in which they are valued and respected. Promoting an environment in which people can fully enjoy their rights and achieve full citizenship is vital. The experience of social exclusion, stigma and discrimination can prevent people from seeking or receiving the opportunities or services they require to maintain good mental health and wellbeing or facilitate their recovery.

In South Australia, the implementation of the *Mental Health Act 2009 (SA)* will provide greater protection of the rights of people using mental health services and their carers, ensuring that people with a serious mental illness retain their freedom, rights, dignity and self-respect as far as possible in the course of their care or treatment.

Consumers of mental health services also have responsibilities in relation to their own treatment and health care, including to respect the rights, freedoms and dignity of others, including mental health staff, carers and other consumers and to actively participate as far as possible in reasonable treatment and rehabilitation processes.

#### Priorities

##### *Service delivery respects individual rights*

- > Ensure all mental health services respect and uphold the individual rights of consumers, carers and their families, including through the implementation of the *Mental Health Act 2009*.
- > Ensure mental health care services are provided on a voluntary basis as far as possible and otherwise in the least restrictive way and in the least restrictive environment possible.
- > Reduce the use of seclusion and restraint as far as possible, in line with best practice approaches to de-escalation, aggression management and a consistent commitment to trauma-informed care processes.
- > Enhance capacity for the use of advance directives.

<sup>2</sup> Article 12 (1), International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, available at <http://www.un.org>

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#### *Access to information and advocacy services*

- > Ensure that consumers and carers have appropriate access to information about consumer's health care and are fully informed about their individual rights.
- > Ensure that information given to consumers about their health care and individual rights is in language or a form that is culturally acceptable and that can be readily understood.
- > Support the provision of advocacy services that help consumers exercise their rights and responsibilities.

#### *Participation and decision-making*

- > Provide avenues for consumers and carers to participate in decision-making processes about consumer's health care and ensure that they are included as partners in the care process.
- > Promote carer and consumer participation in setting priorities, decision-making, planning, implementation and evaluation of mental health care and mental health services and strategies as far as possible.
- > Support policies that promote the fullest possible social and economic participation in the life of the community by people with a mental illness, without stigma or discrimination.

#### *Reduce stigma and discrimination*

- > Promote and support programs and initiatives that actively address stigma and discrimination in the community.
- > Support training and education initiatives in the health and non-health sectors that address specific issues related to mental health to reduce stigma and discrimination.
- > Support media campaigns and initiatives that aim to reduce stigma and discrimination in the community.

#### *Equality of access to health care and health services*

- > Ensure that all population groups, including those with specific mental health care needs, are able to access mental health services that meet their needs on a non-discriminatory basis, irrespective of where they live, their age or cultural background.



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## 6.2 Health promotion, prevention and early intervention

### Promoting positive, informed attitudes towards mental health, preventing illness and intervening early to lessen the burden of mental illness

Effective health promotion, prevention and early intervention strategies will play a key role in improving mental health across South Australia and reducing the prevalence and impact of mental health problems or illness. These strategies will target a range of settings, including families, schools and workplaces and recognise that mental health is influenced by a wide range of social, economic and biological factors, including social exclusion, unemployment, poverty, substance abuse, homelessness, family violence and abuse.

Mental health promotion strategies will promote positive mental health and wellbeing in the community by seeking to increase emotional resilience, reduce vulnerability to mental ill-health, support environments that promote good mental health and encourage people to seek help when they need it. In South Australia, improving mental health literacy will play an important role in enabling consumers, carers and the community to better recognise the risk factors and early signs of mental illness, helping to prevent the onset or relapse of mental illness and supporting early intervention. Increasing people's knowledge about the causes and nature of mental ill-health will also assist in reducing stigma and discrimination.

Prevention strategies will be targeted at the community level, as well as those population groups most at risk, to try and reduce risk factors and promote the conditions that protect against mental ill-health.

For people who experience mental health problems and mental illness, easy and early access to services and provision of the right care, at the right time, by the right people is vital. Mental health problems and illness should not reach crisis point before appropriate care is received. When identified and treated early, mental illnesses may be less severe, shorter in duration and less likely to recur. This can make a significant difference to the impact of mental illness on an individual.

#### Priorities

##### *Promoting positive mental health in the community and increasing mental health literacy in South Australia*

- > Support community awareness campaigns to improve mental health literacy, promote positive mental health and increase help-seeking behaviours.
- > Engage a range of community settings, including schools and workplaces, in mental health promotion activities to increase awareness and organisational capacity, build resilience, reduce risk factors and increase protective factors.
- > Support the provision of training to give people the skills to better recognise mental health conditions.
- > Increase awareness of the signs and symptoms of depression and anxiety and options for help and illness management.

##### *Prevention*

- > Implement prevention strategies targeting vulnerable and at risk groups, including children and adolescents, working in partnership with a range of government and community organisations.
- > Increase awareness of the relationship between mental health and substance abuse.
- > Ensure mental health is a key focus in South Australia's social inclusion and community building agendas to strengthen community resilience and to address risk factors such as unemployment, homelessness and family violence to create environments that support positive mental health.
- > Develop and implement a suicide prevention strategy for South Australia.

##### *Early Intervention*

- > Support effective early intervention strategies for vulnerable and high risk groups.
- > Ensure that consumers are supported to seek and obtain care when they become unwell and that mental health problems and illness do not reach crisis point before appropriate care is received.
- > Improve capacity for early identification and referral to appropriate services both within the health sector and in the community.
- > Assist treatment services to better respond to the early onset of mental illness, particularly for children and young people with emerging mental health problems.
- > Implement an early psychosis program for younger people.
- > Support the implementation of the National Perinatal Depression Initiative.

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## 6.3 Access and integration of services

### Ensuring that people in our community have access to integrated mental health care services that promote recovery

The aim of South Australia's mental health care system is to provide access to an integrated system of services that promote recovery. It is vital that services are able to encourage and facilitate the recovery process through all aspects of service delivery, partnering with consumers to set goals and helping to provide the right care at the right time.

In South Australia, the implementation of a stepped system of care with community mental health services at the centre of the care system will provide for a range of supported accommodation, community rehabilitation, intermediate, acute and secure care options, supported by a comprehensive community mental health care system and clear links to primary health care and other community services. Clearly defined care pathways and effective referral services will be established, with clear information about clinical and community mental health care service options made available to consumers and their families.

As the centre of the stepped system of care, the role of community mental health services will continue to be expanded to provide consumers with improved access to key clinical and non-clinical services, including crisis intervention, community care rehabilitation, accommodation, employment and advocacy services.

Public and private mental health services, non-government organisations and primary health care services will all play a critical role in facilitating access to appropriate mental health care services and ensure continuity of care for people who experience mental illness. Enhancing the capacity of both the primary health care and non-government sectors to provide mental health care services and promote positive mental health will be a priority.

#### Priorities

##### *Ensuring access to services*

- > Ensure that community mental health and hospital services are accessible to all South Australians, regardless of age, cultural background, geographical location or circumstances of life.
- > Provide clear, accessible information about the availability of mental health care services, utilising a range of approaches and technologies
- > Ensure assessment and referral systems are simple, effective, streamlined and flexible and that care pathways are clear, easy to negotiate and meet consumer needs.
- > Support primary health care and community mental health services as the primary access points for mental health care and referrals.
- > Provide effective mental health emergency response services across South Australia.
- > Provide effective and timely transition from emergency departments to appropriate mental health care services.

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#### *Further integration of services into primary health care*

- > Enhance the capacity of the primary health care sector to detect and treat mental illness and promote recovery.
- > Ensure that specialist mental health professionals are accessible to primary health care professionals to provide advice and guidance on the care and treatment of mental illness.
- > Promote an approach which allows co-morbid physical and mental health problems to be addressed holistically, with a view to improving overall health outcomes.
- > Promote good working relationships between the primary health care and other non-health agencies and community services that provide support for people with mental illness.

#### *Implementing a stepped system of care*

- > Invest in non-government services that support people with mental illness in the community.
- > Increase the number and range of housing and supported accommodation places available across South Australia.
- > Support consumer's recovery through provision of a range of rehabilitation services, including secure rehabilitation inpatient facilities, transitional residential rehabilitation, supported accommodation and community psychosocial rehabilitation.
- > Invest in facility and non-facility based intermediate care that is responsive to consumer needs.
- > Ensure the best possible acute hospital and secure care, including through investment in the upgrading or redevelopment of existing buildings and facilities.
- > Ensure appropriate processes are in place for follow up after discharge from mental health services.

#### *Enhancing community mental health services*

- > Implement the recommendations of the Review of Community Mental Health Services in South Australia (2008), including the development of six sectors with best practice community mental health facilities and multidisciplinary community mental health teams to provide a range of assessment, care and home based services.
- > Ensure that community mental health services are at the centre of client care and that provision of services is governed by the needs of the consumer, with appropriate assessment of his or her individual needs and co-ordinated, seamless transitions between different arms of service provision.
- > Facilitate collaborative partnerships and effective transition between community mental health services and acute inpatient facilities, psychosocial rehabilitation support providers and other key government and non-government organisation partners.
- > Enhance the capacity of non-government organisations to provide mental health care and related services.

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## 6.4 Specialist mental health services and interventions for high risk groups

### Providing specialised service responses to meet the needs of vulnerable or high risk groups in our community

Many people in our community experience increased risks of developing mental health problems or illness or have their mental health needs and experience with mental health services uniquely influenced by factors such as age, cultural background, disability, gender, life stage and experience, geographical location, substance abuse or interaction with the criminal justice system.

In many cases, by understanding the increased risks of mental illness in certain population groups, or as the result of certain life events, key early intervention or treatment strategies may be targeted at these groups to try and reduce the incidence, duration and severity of mental illness or mental health problems. In South Australia, specialised services and interventions will be targeted at meeting the needs of groups that would benefit from a specialised service response or where a specialised service response may address any relative disadvantage.

To ensure that service responses are able to take into account the special needs or vulnerabilities of high risk groups, the knowledge and understanding of specific risk factors and effective prevention, intervention and treatment strategies will need to be enhanced across the care system. This includes appropriate training and education for staff across a wide range of sectors.

#### Priorities

##### *Aboriginal people*

- > Ensure that services provided to Aboriginal people are culturally respectful and competent and acknowledge the unique social, emotional, mental health and wellbeing perspectives of Aboriginal people.
- > Support further training for health care services and staff to increase understanding of the values, cultural and linguistic traditions, social structures and history of Aboriginal people and communities and their specific mental health care needs.
- > Ensure that Aboriginal people are engaged in service design, delivery and evaluation, including the development of culturally respectful and acceptable models of care that meet the specific mental health needs of Aboriginal people and which include the services of Aboriginal traditional healers, interpreters and translators.
- > Develop partnerships between government and non-government sectors and Aboriginal people to address the determinants of mental health for Aboriginal people.

##### *Culturally and linguistically diverse communities*

- > Implement culturally appropriate service delivery strategies that meet the distinct and complex needs of CALD consumers across the lifespan and facilitate the provision of specialist services.
- > Support further training for mental health care services and staff on the specific needs of CALD consumers and the delivery of culturally appropriate mental health care, including an understanding of the possible effects of resettlement and the refugee experience on mental health.
- > Increase the involvement of CALD consumers and representative organisations in service design, delivery and evaluation to inform culturally appropriate mental health care and improve health outcomes.

##### *Children and young people*

- > Support parents, families, child care environments and schools to positively influence the social and emotional wellbeing of infants, children and young people and provide secure environments for their emotional and physical development.
- > Prioritise prevention and early intervention initiatives for infants, children and young people who have, or who are at risk of developing, mental health problems or illness.
- > Support strategies to minimise the social and economic consequences of mental ill-health in children and young people, including the provision of appropriate developmental opportunities such as education and vocational training, as well as opportunities for social participation.
- > Implement strategies to address the specific needs of children of parents who have a mental illness.
- > Develop a model of care for child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS) to ensure that services specific to the needs of children and young people are provided in accordance with a consistent and agreed state-wide model.

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### *Older people*

- > Ensure integration and co-ordination of mental health services for older people across the primary health, aged care and specialist mental health sectors in South Australia.
- > Ensure that the needs of older Australians with early onset geriatric conditions, including dementia, are addressed through general and specialist mental health services.
- > Support government and community initiatives that support healthy ageing strategies and facilitate illness prevention and early intervention, including helping older people reduce or manage risk factors for the onset of mental illness.

### *People living in rural and remote areas*

- > Implement an integrated mental health care delivery system for people living in country South Australia.
- > Ensure that people living in rural and remote areas can receive treatment and support in their local community as far as possible.
- > Facilitate assessment and diagnosis through the use of best available technology and resources.
- > Improve co-ordination of transport services and infrastructure for mental health consumers.

### *People in the criminal justice system*

- > Support initiatives and programs designed to prevent people who experience mental illness from entering into the prison system.
- > Provide specialised services to improve the health and wellbeing of people with a mental illness in the criminal justice system and ensure that there are clear referral pathways to mental health services for offenders in the community.
- > Ensure that South Australian Forensic Mental Health Services meet the standards articulated in the National Statement of Principles for Forensic Mental Health (2002)
- > Work to develop a coordinated and consistent operational partnership between Forensic Mental Health Services, adult mental health services, the justice system, other government departments and the non government sector, for the delivery of forensic mental health services across South Australia.

### *Gender*

- > Increase our understanding of the impact of gender on the incidence and experience of mental ill-health in men and women across the lifespan and their approaches to accessing mental health care in order to inform service delivery and health promotion and prevention strategies.
- > Increase awareness of the impacts of violence and abuse on mental health, with particular reference to the experience of women.
- > Increase awareness of the mental health needs of women during perinatal period to ensure appropriate detection of depression and other illnesses and ensure early intervention.

### *People with high and complex needs*

- > Provide an integrated, co-ordinated approach to mental health care for people with high and complex needs.
- > Ensure that psychosocial rehabilitation and support services are linked to secure and affordable long-term housing options.
- > Improve linkages between community mental health services and employment services.
- > Ensure that consumers with co-morbid substance abuse problems receive a drug and alcohol assessment and that strategies to address substance abuse are included and implemented as part of the consumer's mental health care plan.
- > Provide effective interventions for consumers where drug and alcohol use may lead to further experiences of mental illness.

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## 6.5 Families, carers and communities

### Supporting the families and carers of people experiencing mental illness and strengthening community capacity

The relationships, personal support and encouragement provided to a person experiencing mental illness can play an extremely important role in promoting their recovery. At the same time, families, carers and members of the general community are all affected by the experience of mental illness by their family member, friend or neighbour in different ways.

Families and those who undertake a caring role, including children and young people, play a vital and often under-recognised role in supporting a loved one with a mental health problem or illness. Carers commit significant time and energy to their caring role and, along with other family members, may experience personal difficulties and stresses that can make them more vulnerable to experiencing poor health and wellbeing themselves, including depression and anxiety.

The wellbeing of carers and families of people with a mental illness is extremely important and families and carers in our community need to be recognised and supported through the provision of appropriate resources and personal supports, including access to education and training. Mental health and other services must be respectful of and responsive to the needs of carers and families. This includes ensuring that carers are part of service planning, delivery and evaluation processes and that, balanced with a consideration of the rights and needs of consumers, they are provided with information that will assist them in their caring role.

Communities which foster safety, connection, social inclusion and respect provide environments which can enhance social and emotional wellbeing and promote recovery. The integration of mental health care, treatment and rehabilitation into community settings will facilitate access to the range of the community resources to promote the recovery process. The promotion of safe, inclusive and respectful communities that encourage health and wellbeing includes a responsibility to ensure that people experiencing serious mental illness in the community are provided with appropriate care and support.

#### Priorities

##### *Families*

- > Ensure that mental health services are responsive to and respectful of the needs of families of those experiencing mental illness and include them in the care planning process as far as possible.
- > Support initiatives that provide families of a person with a mental illness with resources and supports that meet their needs.
- > Support initiatives that address the specific health and wellbeing needs of children and young people who are carers or who have family members with a mental illness.

##### *Carers*

- > Ensure that mental health services actively acknowledge and support carers of people with mental illness in their caring role and as partners in care.
- > Support ongoing education and training initiatives that help carers in their caring role.
- > Ensure that the knowledge and understanding of carers is respected and that they are actively included at all levels of policy, planning, research and service development to provide advice and set directions.
- > Encourage a range of supports for carers in their caring role and ensure that they are recognised as individuals with their own needs.

##### *Communities*

- > Support and promote initiatives that foster safe, inclusive and respectful communities that encourage social and emotional wellbeing and support the recovery process for people experiencing mental illness.

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## 6.6 Partnerships and cooperation

### Working together to address the determinants of mental health and support consumers towards recovery

Good mental health is everyone's concern and an integrated, whole of community approach is essential to promoting mental health and wellbeing in South Australia. A collective effort from all sectors to promote social inclusion and social and economic participation will help to promote positive mental health and encourage a community environment that supports the recovery process.

Good relationships with friends and family, stable housing, employment, education, income security, social inclusion and participation in community life can all promote positive mental health. In contrast, people who experience social isolation or disadvantage, unemployment, family breakdown, violence, abuse, poor educational attainment, income or housing insecurity or who have substance abuse problems are more vulnerable to mental ill-health. In turn, people with mental illness or a mental health problem are more likely to suffer social and economic disadvantages, including discrimination, with reduced opportunities to participate in the life of the community, inhibiting the recovery process.

As the determinants of health and wellbeing are complex and inter-related, health agencies will be committed to supporting and developing partnerships with both government and non-government organisations in the general health, housing, disability, employment, education, family and community services, justice and drug and alcohol services sectors. This includes respecting the specialist knowledge of each of these sectors and working across sectors to build awareness about how everyday activities and services can promote positive mental health in the community and facilitate the process of recovery for those experiencing mental ill-health.

The role of carers and consumers in supporting and informing intersectoral collaboration will be essential at all levels of policy, planning, research, service development and delivery in order to ensure the best possible health outcomes.

#### Priorities

##### *Enhancing inter-agency co-operation*

- > Identify areas where policies and practices across government agencies can support positive mental health and develop an interagency action plan to support cross government linkages.

##### *Enhancing inter-sectoral collaboration*

- > Strengthen collaboration and partnerships across a range of sectors, including housing, employment, community services, disability, justice, education and health to ensure an integrated approach to health promotion, prevention, early intervention and recovery.
- > Promote access to employment, income support, education, disability, accommodation and other community support services for consumers as part of an integrated approach to mental health care and recovery. Support employment strategies that promote employment and vocational programs linked to clinical and community support services.

##### *Partnerships with non-government organisations*

- > Support collaborative partnerships between non-government organisations, health care providers and government agencies.
- > Increase the capacity of the non-government sector to provide psychosocial rehabilitation and support services.
- > Increase the capacity of the non-government sector to provide advocacy and information services to mental health consumers and carers.
- > Promote the role of consumer and carer organisations in collaborative partnerships.

##### *Partnerships with general practice*

- > Support and acknowledge the key role of general practitioners in providing primary health care services, including mental health care, for both metropolitan and country communities.
- > Promote strong collaboration between hospitals, community mental health services and general practitioners to facilitate continuity of care for consumers.
- > Improve health and wellbeing through collaborative partnerships with general practitioners and statewide divisions of general practice.
- > Promote a shared care approach to service provision.

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## 6.7 Workforce development and planning for the future

### Ensuring a motivated, well-trained mental health care workforce now and into the future

Our mental health care system depends on the knowledge, skills and commitment of those who are responsible for delivering services. This includes people working in the public, community, non-government and private sectors. It is important to acknowledge the link between the overall wellbeing and skills of our mental health workforce and the wellbeing of consumers of mental health services.

Those in the workforce need to be valued, respected and supported in their roles, with access to training and development opportunities provided, and an emphasis placed on the development of multi-disciplinary skill sets which can be used in a variety of health care settings. Training that supports the objectives of the recovery model will also be important.

As reforms to the structure of the mental health care system in South Australia are implemented, corresponding changes in workforce requirements will need to be made. Medium to long term workforce planning will be required to address future challenges in recruitment, including in rural and remote areas, to ensure that there are enough appropriately trained staff to fit the needs of the mental health care system. Workforce planning will also need to include strategies to support the central role of general practitioners in the provisions of primary mental health care, particularly in rural South Australia.

It is also important that the mental health literacy and skills of workforces in non-health sectors who engage with people with mental health problems are enhanced so that services can be provided more effectively to people with mental health care needs. This involves eliminating stigma and discrimination and increasing the ability of these services to identify the existence and impact of mental health problems and provide referrals.

#### Priorities

##### *Recognition and support*

- > Ensure that mental health workers are valued, respected and supported in their roles, recognising that staff health, safety and morale also play an important role in contributing to the overall wellbeing of consumers and service quality.
- > Ensure that workforce culture is inclusive and promotes a positive work environment that benefits staff and consumers.

##### *Training and Development*

- > Ensure that mental health staff in the government and non-government sectors have access to ongoing learning, support and professional development activities that enhance their capabilities and outcomes for consumers.
- > Ensure that mental health staff have the opportunity to develop new skills for work in community-based settings.
- > Ensure sustainable, system-wide training with a recovery orientation is provided to mental health workers and that a recovery focus forms part of organisational cultural norms and behaviours across the mental health care system.
- > Support further training to ensure that the mental health care workforce is culturally competent to deliver a range of mental health services to our diverse population groups.

##### *Recruitment and retention*

- > Implement future workforce development planning strategies and initiatives across government and non-government sectors to ensure that there are sufficient adequately trained staff across the new stepped system of care to meet South Australia's mental health care needs.
- > Address the conditions necessary for the recruitment and retention of adequately trained professional staff in private, public and non-government sectors, including those from Aboriginal and culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.
- > Ensure the key role of general practitioners in the delivery of country mental health services is acknowledged in recruitment and retention policies targeting the development of the health workforce in country areas.

##### *Workforce design*

- > Ensure an appropriate balance of skill mixes, recognising the impact of different skill mixes, staffing numbers and distribution of staff across services in both metropolitan and country South Australia.

##### *Cross-sectoral workforce training in mental health*

- > Improve the knowledge and skills of workers in non-health care sectors such as community services, education, justice, housing and employment about mental health to reduce stigma and strengthen their capacity to assist people experiencing a mental illness.



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## 6.8 Safety and quality

### Ensuring the highest possible standards of care in service delivery to produce the best possible health outcomes for consumers

Safety and quality in mental health care depends on a commitment to consistently achieve the highest possible standards of care in all health care settings, adhere to current evidence-based practice and increase the likelihood of desired outcomes for consumers. The Government of South Australia is committed to the implementation of safety and quality strategies set out in the national strategic plan National safety priorities in mental health: a national plan for reducing harm (2005), including implementation of the National Standards for Mental Health Services.

The application of sound governance and accountability requirements, mechanisms for service monitoring based on measurable standards, good information management practices and a motivated, well-trained workforce is vital. Good governance structures will involve transparent decision-making and clear accountability for the delivery of the best possible standards of care and continuous improvement of services. Services will be monitored and evaluated across the continuum of care to ensure that the best possible health care is provided to people with mental health problems or a mental illness.

The focus of all safety and quality strategies is to enhance consumer health and wellbeing. Services will make every effort to identify, avoid, or reduce, actual or potential harm from mental health care delivery in all environments in which care is provided. Consumers and carers will be involved in the planning, delivery and evaluation of safety and quality programs and service improvement strategies.

Treatment of co-morbid physical health problems and the safe use of medications for people with mental illness and mental health problems will be a key component of South Australia's quality and safety agenda. People with serious mental illness experience far poorer physical health than the general population and the use of medications to treat psychosis can have significant adverse effects on an individual's physical health. We need to ensure that mental health services and professionals are able to actively identify, prevent and reduce harm to physical health associated with treatment for mental illness.

#### Priorities

##### *Governance and accountability*

- > Ensure good governance structures are put in place, decision-making is transparent and there is clear accountability for the delivery and continuous improvement of services.
- > Ensure that there are clear processes for clinical performance and evaluation, clinical risk management, clinical audit and ongoing professional development.
- > Ensure effective complaints management processes are in place and that complaints are addressed.
- > Ensure that appropriate processes are in place for the management of adverse events.
- > Ensure that mental health care is delivered in accordance with evidence-based best practice in all care settings.

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### *Monitoring and evaluation*

- > Promote a culture of continuous quality improvement in all mental health services.
- > Ensure that services are monitored and evaluated across the continuum of care to ensure that the best possible health care is provided to people with mental health problems or a mental illness.
- > Ensure that safety and quality audits and risk assessments are undertaken
- > Ensure that monitoring systems are based on measurable standards, with appropriate benchmarking and outcome measures.

### *Consumer and community participation*

- > Ensure consumers and carers are informed and involved in safety and quality programs, ensuring that feedback on service is provided to health professionals and that consumers and carers are involved in the planning and delivery of services and service improvement strategies.
- > Ensure information about outcomes of care and the performance of the health care system is shared with consumers, carers, health care providers and the public.

### *Physical health and wellbeing*

- > Prioritise the physical health and wellbeing of people with severe mental illness, ensuring that their physical health is assessed and monitored and that they receive evidence-based medical care, particularly where physical health problems are associated with the use of psychotropic medication to treat a mental illness.
- > Increase the understanding of the relationship between physical health and mental health across primary and specialist health care services and in the general community.
- > Ensure intervention for co-morbid physical health conditions occurs at the onset of illness.

### *Safe use of medicines*

- > Ensure the use of medications has a sound evidence base and takes into account a person's mental and physical health needs, an individual risk-benefit analysis and is in compliance with relevant policies and procedures governing the use of medication.
- > Reduce and eliminate where possible the use of multiple psychotropic medications in the treatment of people with psychosis.
- > Facilitate partnerships between general practice and mental health professionals in relation to the medical treatment of people with a mental illness to achieve the highest possible standard of care and consistency of treatment regimes.
- > Support further research and the collection of accurate data on the use of medications to inform policies and procedures governing the best practice use of medications.

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## 6.9 Knowledge, information management and research

### Increasing our understanding of mental health and mental health care provision to better meet the needs of our community

Obtaining accurate information about mental health in South Australia and effectively utilising and communicating the information and knowledge gained will increase our understanding of mental illness and inform evidence-based best practice in mental health care. The ultimate aim is to use the information obtained for the benefit of consumers and to promote mental health and wellbeing in the community. Respect for confidentiality and privacy for consumers and carers must be applied at all times.

To achieve these goals, the information we collect must be accurate, useful, targeted at gaining a better understanding of mental health and the mental health care system and collected in accordance with policies governing privacy and confidentiality. Data collection should not create any unnecessary administrative burdens for those in the mental health workforce. Once collected, every effort should be made to ensure that the knowledge gained is shared across healthcare settings and used to inform best practice in mental health care.

The ongoing development of integrated information management systems which recognise individual consumers as they enter, re-enter or move through different care pathways across the system will ensure continuity of care and will form a key component of a person-centred approach to mental health care.

Research into mental health will also be supported as far as possible, maintaining partnerships and open communication with research organisations and education faculties to ensure that mental health care in South Australia is based on evidence-based best practice.

#### Priorities

##### *Knowledge and information management*

- > Utilise the best possible evidence to inform and improve health care, ensuring that data collected is relevant and utilised effectively to improve knowledge about mental health and service delivery.
- > Improve communication, knowledge sharing and reporting mechanisms across government and non-government organisations.
- > Contribute to the development of a system of unique identification that is interoperable with inpatient data collections.
- > Ensure the information systems are appropriate, maintained and functional, are utilised effectively by staff across the health care system and are not unduly burdensome.

##### *Privacy and confidentiality*

- > Ensure consumer's rights to privacy and expectations of confidentiality are respected, in accordance with the provisions of the *Mental Health Act 2009*.
- > Ensure aggregate, de-identified data is used wherever practical to protect the individuals' rights to privacy and, where consumer identifiable data is required, ensure informed consent has been received from the consumer.

##### *Research*

- > Support evidence-based research in relation to mental health problems and illness, as well as the effectiveness of health promotion, prevention and early intervention strategies in reducing the rate and severity of mental illness.
- > Facilitate mechanisms for sharing research and innovation in mental health care and the communication of best practice initiatives.

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## Glossary

### Acute care

Specialist psychiatric care for people who present with acute episodes of mental illness.

### Advocacy

Representing the concerns and interests of consumers and carers, speaking on their behalf, and providing training and support to enable them to represent themselves.

### Carer

A person who provides ongoing care or assistance to a person with a mental illness, usually a family member and including young carers. This does not include a person who provides care or assistance pursuant to a contract for services.

### Citizenship

Being able to both enjoy the civil, political and social rights associated with being a member of a community and to fulfil the duties and responsibilities associated with that membership, accompanied by a sense of belonging and an ability to participate in the life of the community.

### Community mental health services

Services and teams that provide mental health care services in the community, outside of hospital settings.

### Consumer

A person who utilises or has used mental health care or related services.

### Culturally appropriate

Services are culturally appropriate if they respect and take into account the cultural background, spiritual beliefs and values of a consumer and incorporate this into the way healthcare is delivered to that person.

### Forensic mental health services

Mental health services that provide assessment, treatment and care of people with a mental illness who are in the criminal justice system or who have been found not guilty of an offence because of mental impairment.

### Intermediate care

Services that provide a high-level of care for those experiencing a serious episode of mental illness, but at a lower level of intensity than acute care services.

### Mental health problem

Impaired cognitive, emotional or social functioning, but not to the extent that the criteria for a mental illness are met, or the absence of a sense of personal and emotional wellbeing.

### Mental ill-health

The experience of a mental health problem or mental illness.

### Mental illness

A clinically diagnosable disorder that significantly interferes with an individual's cognitive, emotional or social abilities.

### Perinatal

From conception to one year post-natally.

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## Positive mental health

A state of social and emotional wellbeing in which individuals are able to feel positive about life, deal with the difficulties and challenges they face and make the most of their skills and abilities.

## Recovery

Please see the statement on recovery set out on page 7 of this policy.

## Rehabilitation services

Services that provide individually targeted interventions to assist people to regain, build or develop skills that support their recovery.

## Social exclusion

The experience of feeling shut out from the social, economic, political and cultural systems which contribute to the integration of a person into the community

## Social inclusion

Social inclusion describes a social situation or circumstance in which all people feel valued, their differences are respected and their basic needs are met so they can live in dignity in the society in which they live.

## Stepped system of care

In South Australia, the stepped system of care refers to a tiered care system consisting of support across the community, supported accommodation, community rehabilitation, intermediate care, acute care and secure care. Consumers will be able to 'step up' or 'step down' through the system of care to receive the level of care that best meets their needs and facilitates their recovery.

## Supported accommodation

Safe, stable and affordable housing supported by both specialist mental health services and psychosocial support services to assist the recovery process for people with a mental illness and assist them to live independently in the community.

## For more information

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Non-English speaking: for information in languages other than English, call the Interpreting and Translating Centre and ask them to call The Department of Health. This service is available at no cost to you, contact (08) 8226 1990.

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