



# MI Fact Sheet Series

UNDERSTANDING AND MANAGING MENTAL ILLNESS

## The mental health service delivery framework in NSW

### General Information

- Public and private, government and non-government, and hospital and community comprise the New South Wales Mental Health Services
- The state government is the major provider of acute services for people with serious mental illness
- The usual way to contact a mental health service is via a visit to your local General Practitioner. Your GP will refer you to either a private mental health professional or your local public mental health service
- NSW Health provides a range of specialised mental health services to adults who are developing or experiencing mental health problems or disorders
- Services are primarily delivered by Area Mental Health Services within the state (ten metropolitan areas and eight rural areas). Area Mental Health Services provide inpatient, hospital-based, and community mental health services for all age groups across the spectrum of mental health care - from emergency response to less urgent mental health consultations
- There is also a number of statewide, regional and specialist services, including Early Intervention Services and Departments of Forensic Medicine
- There are 24-hour telephone contact numbers for all NSW Area Mental Health Services.

### Adult Mental Health Services

#### Hospital Inpatient Services

- **Consultation Liaison Psychiatry** provides assessment, consultation and referral for patients in general Emergency Departments. This service also provides Psychogeriatric and GP Shared Care.

- **Psychiatric Inpatient Unit** (wards) provide care for people requiring hospitalisation. They operate 24 hours a day and care is provided by a multidisciplinary team. Many units are located within acute general hospitals. Both individual care and attention as well as a comprehensive activities program designed to meet a range of individual needs are provided. New patients are referred, where appropriate, for follow up by community mental health and other services.
- **Secure/Extended Care Inpatient Services** provide a safe, supportive place for people with a serious mental illness whose behaviours may put themselves or others at risk. Their purpose is to provide bed-based intensive treatment and care to clients who have unremitting and severe symptoms which inhibit their capacity to live in the community.

#### Community-based services and teams

- **Crisis services** provide a crisis and emergency service for the community. In some areas crisis services are available seven days/24 hours with call back arrangements through the night. A psychiatrist is also generally on-call.
- **Case management** provides a range of practical and therapeutic interventions. Emphasis is given to assisting people to develop skills in self-care and independent living in their own environment, thus encouraging them to become fully integrated members of the community.
- **Intensive case management** services are provided to a small number of patients. Much of the case management is concerned with providing access to

basic social and economic entitlements that most people in the community take for granted. Mental Health professionals work intensively with these people on an individual basis keeping them engaged with the service and assisting them with a variety of day to day living activities.

- **Mental health professionals** include mental health nurses, psychologists, social workers, occupational therapists and psychiatrists. Mental health professionals will assess and diagnose a patient's condition and collaboratively work out a treatment plan. They will also work closely with the GP, family members and other health providers.

#### Private psychiatric services

- Although General Practitioners (GPs) are generally in the private sector, in practice they form part of the public mental health system
- Private GPs are often the first point of contact for people with mental health problems. GPs will refer people to either a private mental health professional or to the local public mental health service
- People with mental illness treated by Area Mental Health Services will most often be discharged to the care of GPs in the local community as soon as is practically possible. This makes having a relationship with a good GP very important
- GPs who work out of Shared Care services work in multidisciplinary teams and are often well placed to work with people with mental health issues
- GPs are supported in their work by Area Mental Health Teams and the Centre for Mental Health. These professionals

# The mental health service delivery framework in NSW continued...

provide assessment and support to people with a mental illness

- The most common way of seeing a private psychiatrist is through a referral from a GP, which allows the Medicare rebate to be claimed. (Fees vary, and some psychiatrists bulk bill). Private psychiatrists may not always be available, especially in rural areas
- Private psychiatrists mainly provide outpatient services from their consulting rooms or inpatient services to private hospitals. They may have specialist interests (eg. working with particular age groups or disorders, and using specific therapies).

Private psychiatrists and GPs may work together with Case Management Services in assisting patients to develop skills in self-care and independent living. The private sector incorporates private psychiatric hospitals, but these generally exist only in larger population centres, and they do not take people who require involuntary admission.

## Psychiatric Disability Rehabilitation and Support Services

A range of services provides employment, placement, support, information, day and residential programs and family respite. Some are run by not for profit organisations with government funding.

- **Psychosocial Rehabilitation Day Programs** assist people with severe psychiatric disabilities to improve their quality of life, participate in everyday activities and achieve optimal independent functioning in the

community. This objective is achieved through the development of social and living skills in a group context and through centre-based and community access programs.

- **Residential Rehabilitation** provides intensive psychosocial rehabilitation and supports in group accommodation prior to residents living independently. The emphasis is on developing or regaining skills to deal with daily living activities. Emphasis is placed on developing a resident's confidence to begin or continue schooling, training or employment, as well as supporting positive contact with family and friends. Working in a group enhances self-esteem and social skills and provides important peer support. This form of rehabilitation is particularly helpful for young people who have recently developed serious mental illness.
- **Specialist community mental health services** provide home visits for those people who are home bound or outreach mental health services to rural and remote community health services. Support in the resident's home focuses on everyday life, including budgeting, cooking, caring for oneself and one's home and relating to friends, family, neighbours and local businesses.
- **Employment services** of both state and commonwealth departments provide employment placement and support to people with a mental illness. For example, in Supported Employment, a job coach may assist people in learning a job and adjusting to the environment, so that people can return to work at their own pace.

## Useful references

- Mental Illness Fellowship of Australia  
[www.mifellowshipaustralia.org.au](http://www.mifellowshipaustralia.org.au)
- Mental Illness Fellowship Victoria  
[www.mifellowship.org](http://www.mifellowship.org)
- State Mental Health Information Service  
02 9816 5688 or 1800 674 200
- Mental Health Services  
[www.mentalhealth.asn.au](http://www.mentalhealth.asn.au)
- Lawlink (Attorney General's Department)  
[www.lawlink.nsw.gov.au](http://www.lawlink.nsw.gov.au)  
Toll free 1800 684 449
- Mental Health Coordinating Council  
[www.mhcc.org.au](http://www.mhcc.org.au)  
02 9555 8388
- Mental Health Review Tribunal  
02 9816 5955
- National Alliance of the Mentally Ill (USA)  
[www.nami.org](http://www.nami.org)
- Schizophrenia Fellowship of NSW Inc.  
[www.sfnsw.org.au](http://www.sfnsw.org.au)

## Mental Illness Fellowship of Australia fact sheets

- Mental health legal framework in NSW
- What can friends and family do to help a person experiencing mental illness?
- Family and carer supports and services