

Organisational implementation guide

Key Outcome Area 4

Workforce



Australia needs a mental health workforce that is able to respond to the diversity of the population. We must develop an informed, skilled, flexible and reflective workforce with strong leadership in order to deliver successful strategies that improve access, quality of care and recovery services for CALD clients.

Standard 3 of the *National Practice Standards for the Mental Health Workforce* (2002) addresses 'awareness of diversity'. It articulates the knowledge, skills and attitudes required of the mental health workforce practicing in a diverse society. In order to provide clinically competent mental health care in a culturally diverse society, the workforce must go beyond being culturally aware, to being culturally responsive.

Clinicians and other staff responding to cultural and language diversity need to be:

- Flexible in their approach
- Able to adapt assessment processes and interventions to achieve equitable clinical outcomes across all population groups.

Cultural responsiveness needs to be integrated into clinical training programs in mental health and suicide prevention, as well as broader areas of engagement, and promotion and prevention activities. While the workforce require the knowledge, skills and awareness to provide culturally responsive mental health care, services need to support them to undertake training and to provide a work environment where the training can be put into practice.

Cultural responsiveness must be applied at all the levels of service delivery, from individual treatment through to the broader system. As stated in the *National Mental Health Workforce Strategy* (NMHWS) (2011), ongoing cultural competency training, rather than brief awareness sessions, is the most appropriate strategy for building workforce capacity.

Systemic issues also need to be addressed to support this skilled workforce. Critical outcomes for the Framework include:

- The development of leadership in multicultural mental health
- Improvements in evidence based policy input
- Systematic advocacy
- The establishment of informed networks
- Close collaboration with government and non-government services
- Liaison with workforce initiatives, professional bodies, and the tertiary sector to ensure the future workforce has an awareness of how to apply their professional knowledge and skills to a multicultural population.

The Framework, in line with the NMHWS and the *Fourth National Mental Health Plan* (2009) views the 'mental health workforce', to include other government agencies, the primary care sector, non-government organisations, community agencies, interpreters, and others.