



Australian Government

Department of Health and Ageing

Quality Framework for
Telephone Counselling and Internet-based
Support Services

September 2008



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Introduction to the Quality Framework for Telephone Counselling and Internet-based Support Services

Background

In its 2002 report on telephone and web counselling services in Australia, Urbis Keys Young wrote:

“... there has been little emphasis on the development of standard guidelines for either tele or web counselling services ... A key reason for this is likely to be the lack of appropriate peak bodies or national associations such as those set up in the UK and the US, which has limited debates about the nature and scope of the sector and appropriate quality assurance processes.”

A number of organisations have developed their own quality systems, or adopted established ones, to underpin their work and are operating at very high standards.

However, some organisations, particularly smaller ones, have found established systems unavailable or difficult to access. The resources required to adapt them have been out of proportion to the service's size. With this in mind, and in view of the significant funding for mental health announced in the 2006-07 Federal Budget, including telephone and web-based support programs, the Department of Health and Ageing agreed to support the sector to develop a Quality Framework for telephone counselling and internet-based support services.

Representatives of 27 organisations participated in a workshop in Melbourne in May 2007 and a follow-up workshop in July to develop the framework. A working group, comprising representatives from nine of the organisations, was formed to fine-tune the framework, to develop a self-audit tool that could be made available to the sector and to promote uptake of the framework within the sector.

Members of the Working Group were:

- Associate Professor Geoff Smith (Chair) – *WA Centre for Mental Health Policy Research*
- Mr Alan Woodward – *Lifeline Australia*
- Ms Wendy Sturgess – *Crisis Support Services*
- Ms Wendy Protheroe – *Kids Help Line, BoysTown*
- Professor Gavin Andrews – *CLIMATE Programs, UNSW*

- Mr Terry Houghet-Pincham – *DepressioNet*
- Ms Megan McQueenie – *Mental Health Foundation of Australia*
- Professor Helen Christensen – *eHUB, The Centre for Mental Health Research – ANU*
- Dr Dennis Tannenbaum – *Sentiens*, formerly *InfraPsych*
- Officers of the Department of Health and Ageing – Secretariat

The Quality Framework and its purpose

The Quality Framework has two components:

1. A document listing its *core elements*, a *statement* about the purpose of each element and *guidelines* outlining the evidence that organisations could use to guide quality assessment and planning.
2. A self-assessment tool to enable service providers to identify how well they meet the framework, to determine where there is scope for improvement, and to develop an action plan and monitor progress.

The Quality Framework, which has been developed by *people from the sector* to inform and educate organisations within the sector, represents what was considered important to aim for in demonstrating that they were quality organisations. It recognises the substantial diversity between organisations in size, complexity, maturity, service type, technology and experience in the use of quality systems. Clearly, not all the guidelines would be relevant to all organisations and it was anticipated that each would use only those that they found applicable.

Quality is not a categorical attribute of an organisation, a characteristic that is either present or absent, and it is anticipated that organisations will see the Quality Framework as a useful tool to draw upon in the continuous process of improving services for their consumers. Similarly, the framework should not be seen as a finished work, but the start of a process that will be revisited from time to time to ensure that it remains relevant.

The Department of Health and Ageing is supportive of the Quality Framework and intends to encourage its use. It is important that organisations are able to demonstrate that they have integrated a quality system into how they work to achieve better outcomes for their consumers, staff, the organisation, funding bodies and the community. The Department, like other funding bodies, is committed to this principle. The purpose of this package is to assist organisations within the sector to develop and implement a quality system.

We commend the Quality Framework to all organisations in the sector.



Background and context of the Quality Framework

This Quality Framework was developed in mid-2007 by representatives of national organisations involved in the delivery of telephone counselling and internet-based support services that aim to address mental health and well-being issues of clients and the community.

The Department of Health and Ageing provided assistance in the development of this document.

The organisations invited to participate in its development were:

Auseinet	Mental Health Council of Australia
<i>beyondblue</i>	Mental Illness Fellowship of Australia Inc
Black Dog Institute	Mental Health Foundation of Australia
Bush Crisis Line	Monash University – e-therapy Research Unit
Child Youth Women’s Health Service	Multicultural Mental Health Australia
Crisis Support Services	National Health Call Centre Network
Department of Health & Ageing	Post and Antenatal Depression Association
depressioNet	SANE Australia
Eating Disorders Foundation Inc.	Sentiens
HelpLines Australia	St Vincent’s Hospital
Indigenous Psychological Services	Sydney University – MHC
Inspire Foundation	The Butterfly Foundation
Kids Help Line	The Centre for Mental Health Research – ANU
Lifeline Australia Inc	Vietnam and Veterans Family Counselling Service
McKesson Asia Pacific	WA Centre for Mental Health Policy Research

A vision for the sector

The developers of the framework have a vision that provision of high quality telephone counselling and internet-based support services will significantly improve the mental health and well-being of individuals and the community. In developing the framework they were mindful of the wide range of services provided, and that clients of the services come from diverse cultural, linguistic, social, health and economic backgrounds. This diversity is to be valued and incorporated into all service planning, delivery and evaluation.

Application of this document

The Quality Framework covers organisations providing mental health services involving internet-based support and telephone counselling:

Among them are large variations in types of services, organisational structures, underpinning values, technologies used and staffing profiles. The common thread is the commitment to enhancing mental health and well-being for individuals and the community through the application of relevant innovative technologies.

The Quality Framework will assist organisations to:

- Plan, design, implement and review services against agreed industry standards.
- Undertake ongoing self-assessment for continuous improvement.
- Clarify and define expectations of the service for all stakeholders.
- Set and maintain high standards.
- Develop and apply quality indicators to performance evaluation of all aspects of the organisation.
- Enhance sustainability and demonstrate the value of the services to funders and purchasers.

The Quality Framework will have particular value to the sector by assisting organisations to:

- Identify and apply processes that will improve overall quality.
- Build the knowledge base and capacity of the sector
- Inform practice development.
- Contribute to overall sector growth.
- Promote innovation in the sector within agreed quality guidelines.
- Provide benchmarks for evaluating service and sector performance.
- Increase public awareness and understanding of the value of services provided.
- Enhance public accountability.

Relationship of the framework to national mental health initiatives

The Quality Framework reflects current national mental health initiatives, particularly mental health promotion, prevention and early intervention. The impetus for the framework is derived from an increasing demand for high-quality, evidence-based services and information that will assist in raising awareness and increasing knowledge of mental health issues, reduce stigma and enhance self-management approaches.

It provides a sound framework for delivery of diverse services and the development of new services that address changing community and client needs and preferences.

Clients who access the services provided by the sector can be expected to have differing mental health needs, and duty of care and risk management considerations will be central to application of the framework.

Stakeholders

There is a wide range of stakeholders of the Quality Framework, defined below according to their interests.

Clients of services including their families, carers and friends and the wider community will seek assurance that a service is:

- relevant
- of high quality
- accessible to them
- responsive to their needs
- based on evidence
- one that will treat them with respect and integrity.

Referrers and purchasers of services will seek assurance that a service is:

- relevant
- of a consistent high quality
- responsive to clients' needs, including availability after hours

Staff of an organisation will seek assurance that human resources practices and the work environment:

- support this type of servicing approach
- are of a high order and include clear role definitions
- promote shared values and commitment
- include access to training and development
- provide mechanisms for valuing individual contributions and staff support
- ensure health and safety is guaranteed, including provision of debriefing and supervision as necessary

Managers of the organisation will seek assurances that:

- community and stakeholder expectations are met
- accountability and reporting requirements are met
- services are well managed, high quality, relevant to client needs, produce identifiable outcomes and are value for money

Directors of organisations will seek assurance that:

- all accountability and reporting requirements are met
- the reputation of the organisation is enhanced by the delivery of high quality services
- good governance and management processes are in place

Funding bodies will seek assurance that the service:

- has a good reputation in the community
- consistently delivers high-quality services
- is responsive to community and clients' needs
- is accessible and equitable
- is continually improved by incorporation of evaluation feedback and sound research evidence
- has good governance and management processes in place

The *Australian community* will seek assurance that the services provided by the organisation:

- are of high quality
- support individuals
- are accessible, equitable and inclusive
- are value for money

Government will seek assurance that services:

- are high quality
- are based on clinical evidence
- are accountable
- provide value for money
- enhance government mental health program objectives

Components of the Quality Framework

The Quality Framework has these components:

1. Quality areas
2. Quality statements
3. Quality statement guidelines
4. Self-audit tool
5. Evidence guide/indicators for organisations to use to guide quality planning and assessment
6. Accreditation and reaccreditation processes and infrastructure
7. Delivery of training to promote understanding and skills in quality management
8. Promotion and celebration of quality throughout the sector

The first four components are in this document for organisations to use for planning, implementing and evaluating organisational activities.

Summary of quality areas and statements

1. **Clients.** Organisations will demonstrate a client-centred approach to ensure the needs and well-being of clients are the focus for their activities.
2. **Service delivery.** Organisations will provide services that are informed by evidence and subject to ongoing review.
3. **Staff.** Staff are valued within the organisation and demonstrate competence relevant to the organisation's objectives.
4. **Accountability.** Organisations will meet the funding, legal, financial, ethical and professional requirements in delivering core business. Leadership, innovation and governance. Organisations will demonstrate leadership and innovation in response to the changing needs of service users, stakeholders and the broader community.
5. **Systems.** The systems (technology platforms) will be accessible, reliable, responsive and secure and use adaptable and compatible technologies.

Terminology

Within the sector, there are differences in the use of terminology. The glossary below clarifies terms used in this document.

Client	Consumers and users of the services and their carers and families. It may also include the wider community.
Decision Support Systems (DSS)	Information systems focused on supporting and improving managerial decision making.
High-quality service	Services that meet or exceed the needs and expectations of the client and that reflect current best-practice approaches to mental health service delivery. Section 2 (page 12) defines the elements of high-quality service delivery.
Holistic	Organisations will address clients with a whole of person approach, offering referral for clients and carers, as appropriate, to other relevant services when additional needs of the client can not be met by, or are out of scope of, the organisation.
Internet-based Support Programs	Both synchronous and asynchronous communication online or through email between a counsellor and an internet user.
Service	This will differ with the provider type. In this context the services may be: internet-based support or telephone counselling. Service may also be interchangeable with organisation in some contexts.
Staff	Includes paid and unpaid personnel at all levels of the organisation.
Telephone counselling services	Any telephone communication between a counsellor or therapist and a caller.



Quality Framework Components

Aim of the Quality Framework

The Quality Framework aims to promote development and delivery of high-quality services by all providers within the sector, by assisting them to develop and apply quality indicators to performance evaluation of all their activities. It will also assist the sector to build its the knowledge base and capacity and provide benchmarks for evaluating service and sector performance.

Principles underpinning the Quality Framework

Embedded in the Quality Framework is the understanding that all services will be:

- responsive to client needs
- holistic
- ethical
- beneficial to service users and do no harm
- respectful and empathic to clients
- inclusive and equitable
- evidence based



Details of the Quality Areas

Quality Area	Quality Statement	Quality Statement Guidelines
<p>1. Clients</p>	<p>Organisations will demonstrate a client-centred approach to ensure the needs and well being of clients are the focus for their activities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1.1 Organisations will aim to reduce the impact of mental health issues and mental disorders on clients and their carers (when carers are not the clients) through provision of promotion, prevention, counselling, treatment or support services as early as practicable in the course of the problem or disorder <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1.1.1 The organisation's mission, vision and aims will be on all promotional material. 1.2 Organisations will deliver services that are non-judgmental, empathic and respectful of cultural, spiritual, ethnic, gender, age, disability, sexual orientation and socio-economic background. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1.2.1 Staff training will incorporate these values, practical application and monitoring through supervision and client feedback. 1.3 Organisations will have systems in place to ensure clients' privacy and confidentiality is respected, unless they are deemed to be at risk of harming themselves or others or there is a legal obligation involved. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1.3.1 The organisation has a clear policy around privacy and confidentiality that is supported by staff training, supervision and organisational systems. 1.3.2 Clients will be informed of the policy and how to access it. Clear messages around breaches of policy are also to be communicated to staff and clients. 1.4 Organisations will clearly document and inform clients of their rights and responsibilities as users of the service, <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1.4.1 Clients' rights and responsibilities are documented and made readily available. 1.5 Clients can expect to receive appropriate services, or be referred to appropriate services. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1.5.1 Staff will be trained to supply appropriate services responsibly, or given appropriate links to services for clients. This links to the mission and aims of the organisation. 1.5.2 Organisations will ensure that information or advice provided to clients is based upon the best available evidence. 1.6 Organisations will provide users with information about the key features of their service to empower them to make informed decisions. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1.6.1 As part of effective service delivery, staff will approach the needs of clients in consideration of other issues that may be impacting on them at the time of accessing the service, and make appropriate referrals.

Quality Area	Quality Statement	Quality Statement Guidelines
<p>2. Service Delivery</p>	<p>The organisation will provide services that are informed by evidence and subject to ongoing review.</p>	<p>2.1 Service design and delivery will be informed by research evidence and by community needs.</p> <p>2.1.1 The organisation will undertake regular monitoring and review of its service design and delivery as part of continuous quality improvement.</p> <p>2.1.2 Reviews will include processes for monitoring community needs and evaluating effectiveness of the organisation's service delivery model.</p> <p>2.1.3 Where possible, models of service delivery will be supported by evidence.</p> <p>2.2 Organisations will develop and implement an access and equity plan to address clients' gender, cultural, linguistic, socio-economic and disability needs.</p> <p>2.2.1 Organisations will have written equal opportunity policies consistent with state, territory or Commonwealth legislation. Management will ensure that all staff are familiar with, and adhere to these policies.</p> <p>2.2.2 Organisations will have access and equity as key principles underpinning their planning processes and review them regularly to ensure access is as wide and equitable as possible.</p> <p>2.3 Organisations will have systems to ensure all legal requirements can be met.</p> <p>2.3.1 Organisations will have identified all legal requirements that impact upon service delivery and will have written policies to address them.</p> <p>2.4 Organisations will have systems to ensure all record-keeping requirements are met.</p> <p>2.4.1 Organisations will have written policies and protocols for record keeping, consistent with good practice and legislation (if required), including such issues as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - access to records - storage of records and archives - protection of records - archiving timelines <p>2.4.2 Organisations will ensure that staff are conversant with, understand and follow these policies and protocols.</p> <p>2.5 Decision Support Systems (DSS) will be used in interactive systems, wherever evidence supports its use.</p> <p>2.6 Organisations will have systems to ensure compliance with privacy and other relevant legislation and to meet duty-of-care obligations.</p> <p>2.7 Information provided will be assessed against available evidence and where appropriate, disclaimers included.</p> <p>2.7.1 Organisations will ensure, before information is published or posted, that all information, including publications, are referenced, sourced and dated, and consistent with the available evidence.</p> <p>2.8 Organisations will have systems to ensure quality standards are met.</p> <p>2.8.1 Organisations will, as part of their performance monitoring and review, have systems for review of their services against quality standards.</p>

Quality Area	Quality Statement	Quality Statement Guidelines
		<p>2.9 Organisations will have policies and procedures to promote the safety of all stakeholders, including staff training, in recognition and management of risk.</p> <p>2.9.1 Policies and procedures will be in place to promote safety of clients, carers, staff and the community, including OH&S policy, critical incident and complaints procedures.</p> <p>2.10 Organisations will implement a systematic approach to evaluation.</p> <p>2.10.1 Organisations will implement a systematic approach to data collection and evaluation of effectiveness and efficiency of services against the requirements of stakeholders, including routinely:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – monitoring client outcomes – monitoring service utilisation. – measuring client satisfaction. – monitoring stakeholder satisfaction <p>2.11 Organisations will provide mechanisms for obtaining collective feedback from clients at the service level, and for client involvement in development, implementation and evaluation of service planning, as part of a quality improvement process. Organisations will reflect innovative approaches to service delivery.</p> <p>2.11.1 Organisations will continuously seek to improve services by looking at new ways to provide them more effectively.</p> <p>2.12 Organisations will have established links and communication within programs or other services to ensure referral or transition of clients to promote continuity of care.</p> <p>2.12.1 Organisations facilitate planned transfer or referral of clients when required. This process is documented and clearly communicated to the client</p> <p>2.13 The service outcomes will be disseminated to contribute to the evidence base for all services in the sector.</p> <p>2.13.1 Organisations may have one or a number of ways of publicly disseminating the outcomes of evaluations, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – publishing results in peer-reviewed journals – posting results on web-sites – presenting results at industry conferences – collection, collation and dissemination by peak body or funding body – annual reporting

Quality Area	Quality Statement	Quality Statement Guidelines
3. Staff	Staff are valued within the organisation and demonstrate competence relevant to the organisation's objectives.	<p>3.1 Delivery of services will be provided by skilled, trained and resourced staff with relevant qualifications where appropriate.</p> <p>3.1.1 Organisations will have a policy for staff training, experience and development to ensure a competent service is delivered .</p> <p>3.2 Staff will be required to operate ethically and adhere to a defined code of conduct.</p> <p>3.2.1 Organisations have policies and processes to ensure that staffs operate within organisational codes of conduct and in accordance with organisational aims and objectives.</p> <p>3.2.2 Organisations will provide staff with an orientation package, including policy documents. Staff will have access to these at all times, know and understand them and use them in their daily work.</p> <p>3.3 Organisations will demonstrate commitment to recruitment, development and retention of competent and qualified staff.</p> <p>3.3.1 The organisation will have comprehensive human resources policies and practices that incorporate attraction, recruitment, induction processes, ongoing professional development and retention of appropriately skilled staff.</p> <p>3.3.2 Organisations will demonstrate commitment to equity within their employment programs.</p> <p>3.4 Staff support structures will include access to supervision, work appraisals, mentoring and ongoing professional development.</p> <p>3.4.1 Organisations will ensure staffs have access to staff support structures.</p> <p>3.5 Staff will have and understand clearly defined roles and responsibilities against which their work performance is regularly appraised and developed.</p> <p>3.5.1 Organisations will ensure that each staff member has a clearly defined position description and duty statement, and regular performance reviews.</p> <p>3.6 The organisation will promote and demonstrate a commitment to equity and diversity within the workplace.</p> <p>3.6.1 Clear policy statements will outline equity and diversity commitments and how staff may demonstrate their commitment to them.</p> <p>3.7 Staff will be represented and consulted regarding any organisational change.</p> <p>3.7.1 Organisations will have documented practices in place to ensure staff representation and consultation in organisational planning and development.</p> <p>3.8 Organisations will design and document appropriate staff grievance procedures.</p>

Quality Area	Quality Statement	Quality Statement Guidelines
4. Accountability	Organisations will meet the funding, legal, financial, ethical and professional requirements in delivering core business.	<p>4.1 Organisations will meet contractual obligations through achievement of deliverables and targets and report in a timely manner on outcomes.</p> <p>4.1.1 Management will ensure that all activities are documented and reported regularly to the executive and relevant funding bodies.</p> <p>4.2 Organisations will use structures, processes and procedures that support compliance with legislative, governance, professional and industry requirements.</p> <p>4.2.1 Management will ensure that the organisation has these structures in place, and can demonstrate compliance.</p> <p>4.3 Transparent systems will be used for ongoing management, monitoring and reporting of finances, activities and outcomes of the organisation.</p> <p>4.4 Organisations will establish and implement effective complaints management processes.</p> <p>4.4.1 Organisations will have a comprehensive, transparent complaints process that provides feedback, including a basis for continuous improvement.</p> <p>4.4.2 Management will ensure that all staff and clients are aware of the processes.</p> <p>4.5 Organisations will undertake risk assessment and service reviews to ensure that their services remain current and do no harm.</p> <p>4.5.1 Management will ensure that risk assessments are undertaken as required and that risks are mitigated and reported to the executive.</p> <p>4.5.2 Management will ensure that risk assessment is linked to overall planning for the organisation.</p>

Quality Area	Quality Statement	Quality Statement Guidelines
<p>5. Leadership, Innovation and Governance</p>	<p>Organisations will apply good governance practices and support leadership and innovation in response to the changing needs of service users, stakeholders and the broader community.</p>	<p>5.1 Organisations will engage in activities that promote acceptance of its client group within the broader community, to help reduce stigma associated with mental illness and improve mental health and well being.</p> <p>5.1.1 The leadership will promote, both internally and externally, the philosophy of the organisation to reflect the needs of its client group.</p> <p>5.2 Planning, implementation and review of strategic directions will include internal and external stakeholders.</p> <p>5.2.1 Strategic planning processes are clearly documented and communicated throughout the organisation.</p> <p>5.2.2 Management will seek input from clients and carers as a part of its planning, in a manner that fits the service delivery environment of the organisation.</p> <p>5.3 Organisational culture and practices will be consistent with continuing improvement and accountable to evidence based practice and stakeholder feedback.</p> <p>5.3.1 Leadership will ensure that systems are in place to enable the organisation to be responsive to external developments.</p> <p>5.4 Effective communication systems will enable internal and external stakeholder reporting.</p> <p>5.4.1 Leadership will ensure that effective communications systems are in place and used.</p> <p>5.5 Processes will identify and respond to changing external factors.</p> <p>5.5.1 Leadership will keep abreast of the relevant evidence base, service delivery, external stakeholder feedback and changes in the external environment.</p> <p>5.6 Organisations will have a service delivery evaluation strategy and demonstrate commitment to act on the results of evaluation.</p> <p>5.6.1 Leadership implements regular monitoring and evaluation that links into organisations' planning processes.</p> <p>5.7 Organisations will have governance structures appropriate to their size and service delivery.</p> <p>5.8 Organisations will collect, examine and respond to performance data with respect to meeting strategic directions</p> <p>5.9 Organisations will have structures and procedures to support compliance with relevant legislation and financial obligations, including good accounting and risk-management strategies.</p>

Quality Area	Quality Statement	Quality Statement Guidelines
<p>6. Systems</p>	<p>The systems (technology platforms) will be accessible, reliable, responsive and secure and use adaptable and compatible technologies.</p>	<p>6.1 Organisations will use relevant technology innovatively to maximise effectiveness</p> <p>6.1.1 By providing services using appropriate technology, organisations will enable synchronous and asynchronous interactions in accordance with their aims and objectives.</p> <p>6.1.1.1 Planning for telephone technologies should consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Adequate technical support services for maintenance of current technologies and installation of new technologies. b. Protection against unplanned disruptions and secure back-up systems. c. Security of caller confidentiality, minimising the risk of breaches of security' should be integrated into telephone and accompanying technologies. d. Where recording of calls is incorporated into telephony, systems should be in place to ensure activation arrangements are reliable and secure and include automated caller notification. e. Capacity to provide warm links, with particular regard to managing imminent risk. f. Adequate provision to accommodate demand and minimise risk of technology related call loss. <p>6.1.1.2 Technology for internet and email based counselling services should offer:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Relevant encryption software or technologies to secure information. b. Accessibility through provision of voice activated systems for people with disabilities or with typing issues, video cams for face to face, and large print for visual impaired people. c. Call recording notification consistent with obligations for informing of such recording. <p>6.1.2 Internet services will receive informed consent from clients in regard to the potential risks and benefits of those services, safeguards against those risks and alternatives to those services. (International Society for Mental Health Online). Internet services will provide:</p> <p>6.1.2.1 A disclaimer identifying the limitation of security of information on the internet or via email.</p> <p>6.1.2.2 A statement of any limitations to online counselling and provide other alternatives for service users requiring assistance.</p> <p>6.1.2.3 A service-user declaration that enables identification of minors for whom the service may be inappropriate or for which parent or guardian consent is required.</p> <p>6.1.2.4 A statement setting out the qualifications of counsellors.</p>

Quality Area	Quality Statement	Quality Statement Guidelines
		<p>6.1.3 Static websites providing information and linkages will consider the extent to which technology is able to provide for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Navigation usability, including search capacity and navigation aids. b. Site optimisation, including links and back links. c. Accessibility, including providing for visually impaired people. d. Reliability and efficiency. e. Security for content management and relevant disclaimers. <p>6.2 The effectiveness of the technology will be reviewed at regular intervals.</p> <p>6.2.1 Technology reviews will form part of organisations' strategic planning processes, which will be clearly documented and communicated throughout the organisation.</p> <p>6.2.2 In evaluating technology, consideration should be given to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Operational reliability. b. Capacity to meet demand. c. Usability and functionality. d. Overall performance with respect to accessibility, efficiency and effectiveness. <p>6.2.3 Annual reviews may be complemented by initiatives associated with the development of new technologies available to enhance service.</p> <p>6.2.4 Reviews should incorporate input from service users, including staff and caller feedback.</p> <p>6.3 Web and telephone services will meet Australian and New Zealand standards and comply with all relevant legislation.</p> <p>6.3.1 Management will ensure that organisations have structures in place, supported by policies and procedures, and can demonstrate compliance with relevant legislation.</p> <p>6.3.1.1 Relevant legislation and standards include, but are not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. <i>National Privacy Act 1988</i> and associated Information Privacy Principles. b. Internet codes of practice (pursuant to the requirements of the <i>Broadcasting Services Act 1992</i>). <p>6.3.2 Though not specifically aimed at internet or telephone-based services, due care is also appropriate with respect to meeting national requirements for ensuring accessibility, non-discriminatory and inclusive service. Relevant reference points include Website Standards Association, International Society for Mental Health Online, American Counselling Association's Ethical Standards for Internet Online Counselling, Code of Conduct for Medical and Health Websites, Health on the Net, American Psychological Association and The Practice of Internet Counselling, National Board for Certified Counsellors Inc.</p>



Additional Resources

The following list of resources may be useful for services seeking further information on quality improvements within their organisations, or seeking to achieve Quality Assurance Accreditation.

Existing quality assurance frameworks

- Accreditation for in-patients mental health services (AIMS)
<http://www.rcpsych.ac.uk/crtu/centreforqualityimprovement/aims.aspx>
- American Association of Suicidology
<http://www.suicidology.org/displaycommon.cfm?an=7>
- British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy - <http://www.bacp.co.uk/accreditation/index.html>
- HealthInsite
<http://www.healthinsite.gov.au/>
- Help Lines Australia
<http://www.helplines.org.au>
- HONcode
<http://www.hon.ch/HONcode/Conduct.html>
- Telephone Helplines Association
http://www.helplines.org.uk/quality_standard.htm
- The Health Quality Service
<http://www.hqs.org.uk/>
- Queensland Government – Standards for community services
http://www.communities.qld.gov.au/community/strengthening_ngos/initiatives/standards.html
- Department of Health and Ageing
 - National standards for mental health services – report (1996)
 - National standards for mental health services –brochure (2005)
<http://www.health.gov.au/internet/wcms/publishing.nsf/Content/publicat-mentalhealth.htm>

Accreditation bodies

- Australian Organisation for Quality
<http://www.aoq.org.au/auditing.htm>
- Bureau Veritas Certification
<http://certification.bureauveritas.com>

- BSi Management Systems
<http://www.bsi-asiapacific.com/RegistrationServices/index.xalter>
- Compliance Help Consulting
<http://www.quality-assurance.com.au>
- JAS-ANZ
<http://www.jas-anz.com.au/showpage.php>
- Quality Improvement Council
<http://www.qic.org.au/>
- Quality Management Services
http://www.qms.org.au/index.php?topic_id=66
- RABQSA International
<http://www.rabqsa.com/>
- Sci-Qual International
<http://www.sci-qual.com.au/>
- The Australian Council on Healthcare Standards
<http://www.achs.org.au/accreditstandar/>



Overview of the Quality Framework Self Assessment Process

Purpose

Organisations providing the following types of mental health services are covered by the Quality Framework:

- Internet-Based Support Services
- Telephone Counselling Services

The purpose of the Quality Framework Self Assessment Tool is to enable service providers to:

- Review, plan, design, and implement services against an agreed industry Quality Framework
- Undertake an ongoing cycle of self assessment for the purposes of continuous improvement
- Set and maintain high standards
- Develop and apply performance indicators to measure quality in all aspects of the organisation

Self Assessment Tool

The Self Assessment Tool is to be used in conjunction with the Quality Framework document as an internal evaluation tool. The tool itself is divided into three parts, including:

- PART A: *Self Assessment Form*
- PART B: *Development of an Action Plan*
- PART C: *Progress and Monitoring Report against the Action Plan*

PART A: Self Assessment Form

The purpose of the Self Assessment Form is to help you assess how well your organisation is meeting the quality principles of the Quality Framework and whether there is scope to improve in any of the framework areas. You may choose to utilise feedback from clients and staff to inform this assessment.

To complete the form assess your organisation against the main *quality statement guidelines* (e.g. 1.1) of the Quality Framework, ensuring consideration of any *key quality elements* under each guideline (e.g. 1.1.3).

The Quality Framework document provides organisational examples from within the sector, as a guide to the policies, procedures and practices that a service may have in place. These examples are made available to allow you to contextualise the elements of the Quality Framework. It should be noted that there is no one correct policy, procedure or path, to achieving the quality principles under each element of the Quality Framework.

PART B: Development of an Action Plan

This form can be used within the organisation to identify actions to be undertaken to improve the practices in line with the Quality Framework and the concept of continuous improvement.

This Action Plan will be utilised to assist the development of operational plans and may be useful for reporting purposes.

PART C: Progress and Monitoring Report against the Action Plan

This form can be used within the organisation to monitor actions being undertaken to improve the practices in line with the Quality Framework and the concept of continuous improvement.

This Progress and Monitoring Report can be utilised when assessing operational plans and reporting to boards, stakeholders and supporters.

Quality Area 1: Clients

Organisations will demonstrate a client-centred approach to ensure the needs and well-being of clients are the focus for their activities

Supporting Standards

	Exceeded	Met	Partially Met	Not met
1.1 Organisations will aim to reduce the impact of mental health problems and mental disorders on clients and their carers (where carers are not the clients) through the provision of promotion, prevention, counselling, treatment or support services as early as practicable in the course of the problem/disorder	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
1.2 Organisations will deliver services that are non-judgmental, empathic and respectful of cultural, spiritual, ethnic, gender, age, disability, sexual orientation and socio-economic background	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
1.3 Organisations will have systems in place to ensure privacy and confidentiality of the clients is respected, unless they are deemed to be at risk of harming themselves or others or there is an ethical obligation to involved	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
1.4 Organisations will clearly document and inform clients of their rights and responsibilities as users of the service	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
1.5 Clients can expect to receive appropriate services, or be linked to appropriate services	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
1.6 Organisations will provide users with information about the key features of their service to empower them to make informed decisions, based on the information and support received	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
1.6.1 As part of the process of effective service delivery, staff will approach the needs of the client in consideration of other issues that may be impacting on the client at the time of accessing the service, and make appropriate referrals	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

This standard is:

- Met**
 Not yet met
 Not applicable

Quality Area 2: Service Delivery

The organisation will provide services that are informed by evidence and subject to ongoing review

Supporting Standards

	Exceeded	Met	Partially Met	Not met
2.1 Service design and delivery will be informed by research evidence and by community needs	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2.2 Organisations will develop and implement an access and equity plan to address gender, cultural, socio economic, linguistic and disability needs of clients	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2.3 Organisations will have systems in place to ensure all legal requirements can be met	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2.4 Organisations will have systems in place to ensure all record keeping requirements are met	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2.5 Decision support will be utilised in interactive systems, wherever evidence supports its use	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2.6 Organisations will have systems in place to ensure compliance with privacy and other relevant legislation and to meet duty of care obligations	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2.7 Information provided will be assessed against available evidence and where appropriate disclaimers included	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2.8 Organisations will have systems in place to ensure industry quality standards are met	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2.9 Organisations will have policies and procedures in place to promote the safety of all stakeholders, including staff training in recognition and management of risk	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2.10 Organisations will implement a systematic approach to evaluation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2.11 Client input to service planning, delivery and review will be sought	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2.12 Organisations will reflect innovative approaches to service delivery	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2.13 Organisations will have established links/ communication within its programs or other services to ensure referral/ transition of clients to promote continuity of care	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2.14 The dissemination of the outcomes of the evaluation of services will be provided to contribute to the evidence base for all services in the sector	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Quality Area 3: Staff

Staff are valued within the organisation and demonstrate competence relevant to the organisation’s objectives

Supporting Standards

	Exceeded	Met	Partially Met	Not met
3.1 Delivery of services will be provided by qualified, skilled, trained and resourced staff	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3.2 Staff will be required to operate ethically and adhere to a defined Code of Conduct	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3.3 The organisation will demonstrate a commitment to the recruitment, development and retention of qualified and competent staff	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3.4 Staff support structures will be in place including access to supervision, work appraisals, mentoring and ongoing professional development	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3.5 Staff have and are aware of, their clearly defined roles and responsibilities against which their work performance is regularly appraised and developed	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3.6 The organisation will promote and demonstrate a commitment to equity and diversity within the workplace	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3.7 Staff will be represented and consulted regarding any change processes and organisational agendas	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

This standard is:

- Met**
 Not yet met
 Not applicable

Quality Area 4: Accountability

Organisations will meet the funding, legal, financial, ethical and professional requirements in delivering core business

Supporting Standards

	Exceeded	Met	Partially Met	Not met
4.1 Organisations will meet contractual obligation through achievement of deliverables and targets and report in a timely manner on outcomes	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4.2 Organisations will utilise structures, processes and procedures that support, compliance with legislative, governance and professional /industry requirements	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4.3 Transparent systems for ongoing management, monitoring and reporting finances, activities and outcomes of the organisation are utilised	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4.4 Organisations will establish and implement effective complaints management processes	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4.5 Organisations will undertake risk assessment and service reviews to ensure that their services remain current and do no harm	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

This standard is:

- Met**

 Not yet met

 Not applicable

Quality Area 5: Leadership, Innovation and Governance

Organisations will apply good governance practices and support, leadership and innovation in response to the changing needs of service users, stakeholders and the broader community

Supporting Standards

	Exceeded	Met	Partially Met	Not met
5.1 Organisations will engage in activities that promote acceptance of its client group within the broader community, to help reduce stigma associated with mental illness and improve mental health and well being	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5.2 Planning, implementation and review of strategic directions is inclusive of internal and external stakeholders	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5.3 Organisations will involve clients and carers in service planning, development and delivery	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5.4 Organisational culture and practices, are consistent with continuing improvement and are accountable to both evidence based practice and stakeholder feedback	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5.5 Effective communication systems are utilised to enable internal and external stakeholder reporting	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5.6 Processes are in place for identifying and responding to changing external environment factors	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5.7 The organisation has a service delivery evaluation strategy in place and demonstrates a commitment to act on the results of evaluation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5.8 The organisation will have in place governance structures appropriate to their size and service delivery	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5.9 The organisation will develop strategic directions and implementation strategies and articulate these to their stakeholders	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5.10 The organisation will collect, examine and respond to performance data with respect to meeting its strategic directions	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5.11 The organisation has in place structures and procedures to support compliance with relevant legislation and financial obligations including good accounting and risk management strategies	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

PART C: Progress and Monitoring Report against the Action Plan

Date of Self Assessment: _____ Name of Assessor: _____ Position of Assessor: _____ Signature of Director: _____
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Identified Opportunity for Improvement (Framework Area and issue)	Actions taken	Is further action required?	Action Officer

In line with the concept of continuous improvement, if further action is required, please transfer required actions into a new Action Plan.

