

Dual Diagnosis Capability

In recent years the Eastern Dual Diagnosis Service (EDDS) has worked in partnership with the Eastern Metropolitan Region Psychiatric Disability Rehabilitation and Support Services (now Mental Health Community Support Services MHCSS), Alcohol and Other Drug (AOD) Services and Clinical Mental Health (CHM) Services in developing tailored Dual Diagnosis Capability training programs. These programs provide a sector specific approach to enhancing the knowledge and skill of clinicians and practitioners; the intention of these training programs is to develop the capacity of clinicians and practitioners to become better problem solvers for individuals with co-existing mental health and alcohol and other drug problems. Consumer and carer representatives are invited to participate in the training programs and provide feedback regarding training delivery and other relevant aspects.

Capability as a concept is discussed as both individual and organisational and is an opportunity for competent 'expert learners' within organisations to develop new and innovative problem solving skills aimed at improving the response to consumers via a range of methods which are not restricted to key competencies and are appropriate to the experience and place of work.

Mental health and AOD practitioners, as part of an organisational/service response, are being asked to enhance their competence to expand their range of problem solving approaches to consumers with co-existing substance use and mental health problems. The role of the Victorian Dual Diagnosis Initiative (VDDI), which includes the Eastern Dual Diagnosis Service (EDDS), is to support organisations/services to develop opportunities and resources to enhance the capability of clinicians and practitioners.

The Dual Diagnosis: Key directions and priorities for service development policy document (Department of Health, 2007) provides a definition of individual dual diagnosis capability as;

“Dual diagnosis capable means being able to screen for dual diagnosis; where indicated, conduct a more detailed assessment that enables the development of an integrated treatment and care plan; and be aware of and able to use agreed referral pathways within and between services in order to provide a seamless service for dual diagnosis clients.

“Dual diagnosis capability refers to the evolving capacity and orientation of workers, agencies and sectors to routinely identify, welcome and respond effectively to a range of co-occurring mental health and substance use concerns. It does this with an integrated treatment, recovery-oriented focus with the person and their family or carers driving their recovery” - Victorian Dual Diagnosis Initiative 2013

The EDDS has been working from a provisional understanding of dual diagnosis capability, which identifies dual diagnosis capability from both an organisational and individual perspective. This should incorporate standards of practice supported by local policy and procedure, and include processes for staff development to enhance problem solving skills and enabling the 'expert learner' and a capacity to measure progress in meeting standards of service delivery. (Dual Diagnosis Capability Discussion, April 2011).

The EDDS currently provides three sector specific streams of capability training. This involves the provision of workshops , a mentoring program and on-line resources.

Ultimately dual diagnosis capability will be measured by the success of individuals and organisations in improving outcomes for people with co occurring substance use and mental health concerns.

Definition of “Dual Diagnosis Capability”

Is the enhancement of routine screening, assessment, intervention, consultation and referral functions addressing the needs of consumers with co-occurring mental health and substance use problems.

Dual diagnosis capability relates to the actions of a service in the provision of integrated treatment and the additional skills and knowledge required of staff to enhance the routine delivery of their work within the normal bounds of the services offered and supported by policies, procedures and auditing processes. In this way the focus is on the system rather than individuals to promote a unified response to individuals with co-occurring substance use and mental health problems.

Dual diagnosis capability will be different for sectors and service types within sectors. Training in relation to enhanced skills and knowledge should be tailored to sectors and service types, and disciplines working within each service, and ideally linked to competency based learning activities within the VET and higher education sectors.

Dual diagnosis capable services support continuing opportunities for knowledge and skill development in group and individual settings via, mentoring, reciprocal rotations, portfolio positions and internal and external training and education.

Within this systemic definition of dual diagnosis capability the response to individuals with co-occurring substance use and mental health problems is measured by the activity of the service as opposed to individual measurement of competency.

Dual Diagnosis capability attainment is a dynamic and systemic event in which services tailor integrated responses required by practitioners to the needs of the presenting consumer group.

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