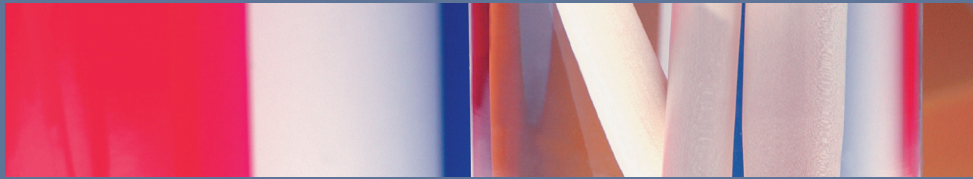




Mental Health Nurse Incentive Program



Mental health nurses have the opportunity to embark on a new career path with greater job opportunities while providing coordinated clinical care for people with severe mental disorders under funding arrangements which commenced in 2007.



the Australian College
of Mental Health Nurses Inc.
www.acmhn.org

Mental Health Nurse Incentive Program

Background

The *Mental Health Nurse Incentive Program* (MHNIP) provides non-MBS incentive payments to community-based general practices, private psychiatry services and other appropriate organisations (including Divisions of General Practice) who engage mental health nurses to assist in the provision of coordinated clinical care for people with severe mental disorders.

What are the benefits of the incentive program for patients?

People with severe mental illness are most at risk of failing to access an appropriate range of services because of their persistent psychiatric symptoms, their level of disability and/or their isolation from family and other social support networks. For the majority of people with mental illness, effective community-based support will reduce their need for acute hospital services, leading to improved health outcomes and reduced costs of care. Services under this initiative are provided at little or no cost to the patient/client.

What are the benefits to mental health nurses?

The incentive program provides mental health nurses with a new career path and job opportunities – expanding the scope and autonomy of their clinical practice.

Mental health nurses engaged under this incentive program will work with community-based general practitioners and private psychiatric practices and other appropriate organisations. This will provide mental health patients/clients with a more integrated treatment

plan, improved continuity of clinical care and increased access to other health care professionals.

What services are provided by mental health nurses?

Mental Health Nursing is a specialised branch of nursing with a focus on the care of people with mental health problems or mental disorders. Mental health nurses engage with patients/clients in a truly holistic way, assisting people to maximise their life potential by overcoming the illness or coming to terms with its impact on their lives. They are skilled in a range of counseling and psychotherapeutic techniques.

The range of client-focused services mental health nurses provide under the MHNIP includes:

- periodic reviews of mental state,
- Information on physical healthcare to patients,
- medication management and monitoring,
- provision of health promotion information,
- undertaking home visits,
- integrated clinical services from GPs psychiatrists, and allied health workers eg psychologists, and
- improving patient links to other health professionals and clinical service providers.

The MHNIP only provides funding for specialist mental health nurse positions. Mental health nurses address mental health and physical needs of patients and undertake relevant record keeping and reporting which is directly related to the program, or their scope of practice as a mental health nurse.

How do mental health nurses become involved in MHNIP?

Eligible organisations may engage the services of mental health nurses in a variety of ways, but this must be in accordance with the MHNIP guidelines. Some organisations may advertise for nurses, others may engage nurses they know, and some nurses may promote their availability for the MHNIP. In 2008, shared employment arrangements were introduced to allow participating private organisations and state and territory health organisations to enter into an agreement whereby a participating private eligible organisation can utilise the services of state or territory employed mental health nurses on a fee for service basis.

Nurses do not need to be engaged as employees under this program although some may choose to do so and some nurses may seek to be engaged through contractual arrangements. For example, some Divisions of General Practice have engaged the mental health nurse for use by local general practices as an employee, and some private psychiatrists and general medical practitioners have chosen to contract an independent mental health nurse or service.

What qualifications do mental health nurses need under this incentive program?

Practices and organisations eligible for funding under the incentive program are required to engage the services of a mental health nurse who holds a Mental Health Nurse Credential with the Australian College of Mental

Health Nurses (ACMHN). The ACMHN is the peak professional mental health nursing organisation in Australia and its Credential for Practice Program (CPP) recognises that an individual nurse has met the standards set by the ACMHN for a specialist mental health nurse.


Until 31 December 2009 interim arrangements will apply for those nurses not eligible to be credentialed immediately. Nurses taking up positions under the interim arrangements will need to meet the following requirements:

- have current registration as a registered nurse,
- have obtained, or are working towards obtaining, specialist qualifications in mental health nursing, and
- have 3 years recent experience in mental health nursing.

All nurses working under the incentive program must be credentialed by 31 December 2009.

How are payments made under this incentive program?

The payment to the organisation is for engaging the mental health nurse and is based on sessions with clients that are undertaken by the mental health nurse. These are claimed on a monthly basis. Nurses have the opportunity to negotiate specific payment arrangements with the service that engages or retains the nurse. However, as this is a specialist mental health nurse role, the ACMHN advocates nurses who take up the positions as employees are to be paid no less than a Clinical Nurse Specialist level (NSW or state equivalent).



Participating organisations (except for shared employment arrangements) may apply for establishment funding under this Program of up to \$10,000 (GST free). Establishment payments are triggered by evidence of engagement of a mental health nurse and may be available to an organisation once only, irrespective of the number of nurses engaged. Payment amounts for establishment are tied to the number of sessions per week over a six month period being provided by the mental health nurse.

Credentialing questions and answers

I am a member of the ACMHN.

Do I meet the eligibility criteria for the MHNIP?

Being a Credentialed Mental Health Nurse is not the same as being a member of the ACMHN. You must hold a Credential from the ACMHN, or meet the interim eligibility criteria as described above for 2009.

What is Credentialing?

Being a Credentialed Mental Health Nurse identifies you as a specialist in mental health nursing. It indicates to employers, professional peers, consumers, and others that you have achieved professional standards for practice in mental health.

How do I become a Credentialed Mental Health Nurse?

The ACMHN Website (www.acmhn.org) contains all the information you will require, including an application form and guidelines for you to download. You will need to provide evidence of specialist postgraduate studies in mental health and evidence of experience and ongoing professional development and education relevant to mental health.

How do I get specialist qualifications in mental health?

Specialist qualifications in mental health can be a postgraduate Diploma or Masters degree and are available at most universities where postgraduate nursing programs are offered. Each State and Territory Department of Health, and the Australian Government offers scholarship opportunities. A list of postgraduate courses and scholarship contacts can be obtained from the ACMHN website at www.acmhn.org

Will the ACMHN assist me with my application for credentialing?

Yes, the ACMHN will advise you on what you need to do and put you in touch with other Credentialed Mental Health Nurses to assist you if necessary. The ACMHN website also contains a range of support information related to credentialing and the MHNIP.

The Australian College of Mental Health Nurses - www.acmhn.org - 1300 667 079

© March 2009 (Revision 4)

The Australian College of Mental Health Nurses acknowledges the assistance of the Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing in producing this brochure.