

C&C Project

Consumer and carer experiences of care survey Project

Carers' update 1 May 2007



This is the first carer bulletin updating you on the *Consumer and carer experiences of care survey Project*. This pilot project, funded by the Department of Human Services, is coordinated in partnership with the Victorian Mental Illness Awareness Council and the Network for Carers of people with a mental illness. Expected to conclude at the end of 2007, the project trials new ways of involving carers and consumers in giving feedback to public mental health services about their experience of care. This is done as part of ongoing service quality improvement programs. An important aspect of this project is keeping carers informed about the progress of the project.

The four Clinical and four Psychiatric Disability Rehabilitation and Support Service sites participating in the pilot project are listed below.

List of pilot sites

Clinical mental health services	Psychiatric disability rehabilitation and support services
Eastern Health (adult, aged)	Prahran Mission
Southern Health (adult, CAMHS)	Doutta Galla Community Health
Ballarat Health (adult, aged)	Centacare
Bendigo Health (adult, CAMHS)	Mallee Family Care

The project timeline is divided into five phases. We are pleased to announce that we have reached the completion of Phase 1.

Phases of the project

Phase 1	Collect ideas from carers	We find out from you the best questions to ask carers in a survey of carer experiences
Phase 2	Planning the survey	The questions to ask carers at pilot sites are written using your ideas
Phase 3	Deliver survey through questionnaire and other methods	Carers tell us about their experiences answering the questions you helped us to develop
Phase 4	Analyse survey responses	We examine the responses and consider what they mean
Phase 5	Feedback to community	We tell you, service staff and the Department of Human Services what we found

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Phase 1: Collecting ideas

Many of you would be aware, in **Phase 1** we used discussion groups to consult with over 90 carers from different pilot sites across the state, including carers from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, about what issues they felt were important to include in a survey evaluating consumer and carer experiences of care from mental health services. **The project team enjoyed meeting carers and would like to thank all who took part in the discussion groups and helped to organise and make contact with other carers.**

We have been working hard to draw together the key issues that arose through the discussions to provide direction on survey question development. Carers identified important themes from their experience of mental health services. The most common themes are:

- **Accessing services:** included issues such as early response, assessments, admission to inpatient units, accommodation waiting lists).
- **Valuing the carer:** included the need to be listened to and respected by staff.
- **Communicating with carers about treatment and programs:** including consumer and carer focused-discharge, easy and regular contact with carers, family-sensitive use of confidentiality, use of carer database.
- **Providing support for carers:** such as planned and emergency respite, emotional support and support groups, access to Carer Support Fund, sibling support, family recreation programs.
- **Engaging the consumer:** included issues such as focus on consumer recovery, healthy lifestyle, pro-active outreach, age-appropriate programs, improving community reintegration.
- **Providing information:** this included information about mental illness, about mental health services generally and that particular service, and presented in a variety of ways including in person.

Phase 2: Planning the survey

We are now approaching **Phase 2** of the project. The key themes and related issues will help in drafting the questions for the survey. The survey itself is a collection of different methods for gathering information from carers about their experiences of care. It could include written questionnaires, brief telephone interviews, focus groups and individual face-to-face interviews.

Selecting carers to take part in the survey

Decisions on how consumers and carers will be selected to take part in the survey are being finalised. As the selection process is randomised, we cannot guarantee that any particular carer in a pilot site will be surveyed this time. However, in order to ensure that the survey has the highest chance of reaching you, if you are currently at one of the services participating in the project, we suggest that you contact your case manager or key worker at that service to check that your details are current on the service's database. Also, keep an eye out for posters advertising the survey at your participating service.



Planning for Feedback of Results

Services have been asked to start planning the processes they will use to feed back the survey information and how results will be responded to within their quality improvement programs. These programs are expected to involve consumers and carers.

We will continue to keep carers informed of the project's progress at the end of each of the phases by way of this bulletin. One of the factors determining the success of this project is that carers are kept informed. Feel free to pass this bulletin on to other carers of people with mental illness.



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Network for carers of people with a mental illness

www.carersnetwork.org