

C&C Experience

Carers' update 2 December 2007



This is the second *carers' update* on the *Consumer and carer experience of care and support, a mental health quality improvement initiative*. This is a pilot initiative, funded by the Department of Human Services, coordinated in partnership with the Victorian Mental Illness Awareness Council and the Network for Carers of people with a mental illness. It trials new ways of involving carers and consumers in giving feedback to public mental health services about their experience of care and support, as part of an ongoing quality improvement program. One important aspect of this process is keeping carers informed about the progress of the project.

List of pilot sites

The four clinical and four Psychiatric Disability Rehabilitation and Support Service (PDRSS) sites participating in the pilot project are listed below.

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

The project timeline is roughly divided into five phases. We are pleased to announce that we have reached the completion of phase two. We estimate that carer interviews will take place during February 2008.

Phases of the project

Mid 2006 ↓ Mid 2008	Phase 1	Collect ideas from carers	We find out from you the best questions to ask carers in a questionnaire of carer experiences
	Phase 2	Develop questions	The questions to ask carers at pilot sites are written using your ideas
	Phase 3	Telephone interviews Individual interviews Focus groups	Carers tell us about their experiences answering the questions you helped us to develop
	Phase 4	Analyse grouped 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



What have we been up to?

During phase one of the project we consulted widely with consumers and carers from each of the service sites about what issues they considered to be important to include in a questionnaire of their experiences.

Phase 2: Developing questions

In the resulting questionnaire we have tried to incorporate as many of the views as possible that were expressed in the carer discussion groups. We have finalized the questionnaire, which will be used in the telephone interview. These are two examples of the question that will appear on the questionnaire:

- Did staff give you encouragement and support?
- Did staff give you an after-hours phone number to contact for support?

Obtaining ethics approval

During phase two all the procedures necessary to obtain Human Research and Ethics Approval were developed by the teams, the application was submitted and following some revisions has been approved by the Department of Human Services HREC.

Phase 3: Delivering questions

In the New Year we will be approaching a very exciting part of the project where the telephone interviews, individual interviews and focus groups will begin. You can expect to see posters and brochures advertising this phase at your service.

Who can take part?

Because we are using standard research practices, a number of carers will be **randomly selected** to take part in this questionnaire. Therefore we cannot guarantee that any particular carer in a pilot service will be invited to participate at this time. However, in order to improve your chances of taking part in the survey, we urge carers who are in participating services to contact their case manager or key worker and check that their details are up-to-date on the service's database.

Telephone interviews

Those who are selected will receive a letter advising them to expect a phone call from a telephone interviewer who will invite them to participate in the questionnaire. All interviewers will have received training and support from our consumer and carer project teams. Taking part in this project is **completely** voluntary. If a carer agrees to participate, the telephone interview should take only about 20 minutes. Written versions of the questionnaire with a reply paid envelope can also be sent out to carers if they prefer to complete it in hard copy.

All carers who complete the telephone interviews will be offered the opportunity to receive a summary of the findings of the project in recognition of their contribution.

Focus groups and individual interviews

Participants who complete a questionnaire will also be invited to register their interest in attending either an individual interview or a focus group at the service to further explore the key items arising from the questionnaire process. Focus groups and individual interviews will be facilitated by members of the consumer and carer project teams. Participants will be selected from this list.

We will continue to keep carers informed of the initiative's progress as each phase ends through the *carers update*. One of the factors determining the pilots' success is that carers are kept informed of its progress so please feel free to pass this on to any other carers of people with mental health issues.



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Network for Carers of people with a mental illness
www.carersnetwork.org