

FAMILIES AND CARERS SUB-COMMITTEE TERMS OF REFERENCE

Background

Mental health consumers, families and carers have a unique contribution to make to improving the quality of mental health service delivery and in turn improving their quality of life.

Consumer, family and carer participation in the planning, delivery and evaluation of mental health services is endorsed by national and state policies, including the *National Mental Health Strategy* and the policies and documents that underpin it.

In the mental health field, consumer, family and carer participation is generally accepted as the involvement of consumers, families and carers in decision making about their own care (or that of the person they are caring for), service planning, policy development, setting priorities, training and evaluation, and addressing quality issues in the delivery of mental health services.¹ All participation must be meaningful, supporting consumers, families and carers to provide input that influences and improves mental health services.

In particular, families and carers are recognised as having unique expertise and understanding. Their direct experience and close observation in their caring role brings an additional perspective to clinical care. Involving families and carers in determining mental health practices and priorities can contribute to improving mental health service delivery and service outcomes.

Purpose

The purpose of the Families and Carers Sub-Committee will be to provide advice to the NSW Mental Health Program Council on policy, planning and strategic issues relating to mental health care in NSW.

Terms of Reference

- Support the Mental Health Program Council in ensuring appropriate family and carer participation into service planning, development and evaluation in NSW mental health services.
- Review and comment on policies that go before the Mental Health Program Council for endorsement, to ensure all issues have been considered.
- Provide advice to the Mental Health Program Council on issues of concern to families and carers of people with a mental illness.
- Contribute to the development of a Framework for Consumer, Carer and Community Participation in NSW Mental Health Services.
- Contribute to the development of a framework and strategies to increase the engagement with families and carers as partners in care.
- Undertake other such roles and responsibilities as may be requested by the Mental Health Program Council or the Director, Mental Health and Drug & Alcohol Programs.

Membership

The membership of the Mental Health Families and Carers Sub-Committee will comprise:

- Director, Mental Health and Drug and Alcohol Programs, or delegate
- Executive Officer, Mental Health Carers ARAFMI NSW, or delegate
- Executive Officer, Carers NSW, or delegate
- Manager, Prevention and Community Partnerships
- Senior Project Officer, Consumer and Family Program Development
- A representative from two non-government organisations who provide support services for families and carers of people with a mental illness under the Family and Carer Mental Health Program
- A mental health carer advocate representing paid carer advocates in NSW
- Two young carers representing young people caring for someone with a mental illness
- Two carers representing families and carers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander mental health consumers
- A carer representing families and carers of culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) mental health consumers
- A carer representing families and carers of mental health consumers receiving services through the NGO sector
- A carer representing families and carers of older mental health consumers
- An older carer representing older people caring for someone with a mental illness
- A carer representing families and carers of people with an intellectual disability and a mental illness
- A carer representing families and carers of forensic mental health consumers
- A carer representing families and carers from rural or remote Area Health Services
- A carer representing families and carers from metropolitan Area Health Services.

Chair

The Sub-Committee will be co-chaired by the Director, Mental Health and Drug and Alcohol Office and a carer who successfully applies to be on the Sub-Committee.

Secretariat

The Mental Health and Drug and Alcohol Office will provide secretariat support.

Governance Structure

The Families and Carers Sub-Committee will be a Sub-Committee of the Mental Health Program Council and will report to the Council.

Meeting frequency

Three meetings will be held per year.

Quorum

A quorum for the meeting will be 50% plus one family and carer representatives.

Payment

Carer representatives on the Families and Carers Sub-Committee who are not being paid for their time, will be reimbursed by the Mental Health and Drug & Alcohol Office for out of pocket expenses incurred through involvement in the Sub-Committee in accordance with relevant NSW Health Policies.

Timeframe for Review

The Families and Carers Sub-Committee and membership will be reviewed after 2 years. At this time 50% of the family and carer representative positions on the Sub-Committee will be re-advertised. The remaining positions will be re-advertised the following year, resulting in a staggered nomination process. Following this process, appointments to the Families and Carers Sub-Committee will be for two year terms. Identification of positions to be re-nominated in 2011 will be determined by the Sub-Committee closer to the renomination date.

ⁱ National Consumer and Carer Forum of Australia, *Consumer and carer participation policy: A framework for the mental health sector*, NCCF, Canberra, 2004.