

POLICY STATEMENT 5

NATIONAL STANDARDS FOR MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES AND ACCREDITATION IN PRIVATE PSYCHIATRIC HOSPITALS

Background

Lived Experience Australia strongly supports accreditation of private mental health services to ensure they provide a safe place in which to receive quality and evidenced based treatment and care. As access to private hospitals is not restricted by factors that apply in the public sector, consumers and carers in the private sector potentially have a greater range of choice than those using public services. Accreditation of private mental health facilities assists private sector consumers and carers in the decision making process by providing information about levels of safety, care and the quality of services on offer.

The National Standards for Mental Health Services (NSMHS) were developed in 1996 with only the public sector mental health services in mind. As a consequence, very few private mental health facilities have been accredited against the NSMHS, although there are good safety and quality processes in place in most if not all, private mental health facilities.

To date, the NSMHS have not been the focus of the self assessment process for accreditation. Rather the emphasis is on the accrediting bodies own standards as organisations prepare for and measure their performance against these. Lived Experience Australia supports accreditation against the NSMHS rather than linking or mapping these against existing accrediting bodies own products. Consumers and carers are of the view that this can diminish the focus of accreditation of mental health services to the clearly articulated minimum benchmarks that the NSMHS demand.

Lived Experience Australia therefore strongly supports the same accreditation requirements for private sector mental health facilities as exist for public mental health services. That is to say that any private hospital with mental health beds, should be accredited by way of an in-depth review against the NSMHS. Lived Experience Australia acknowledges the need to reduce the burden associated with accreditation processes and the additional cost of a consumer surveyor to the survey team, but believes that if a mental health bed is provided, then the organisation must meet the requirements of the NSMHS. A large number of private psychiatric hospitals are stand-alone facilities and as such, have the treatment of mental health as their core business.

Lived Experience Australia also strongly supports the use of consumer surveyors as part of the accreditation process in the private mental health sector as the requirement for the in-depth review of the NSMHS, the current practice in the public system. Lived Experience Australia also supports consideration by accrediting agencies to include a carer surveyor as a member of survey teams.

Lived Experience Australia also believes that the NSMHS should be made available to all stakeholders, including consumers and carers. The task of making the public aware of the existence and content of the Standards is a task that has many challenges. For example, many consumers entering the mental health system, either public or private, still do not know the content of the NSMHS that have been in existence since 1996.

Under the substantial revision and implementation of the NSMHS adopted in September 2010, Lived Experience Australia believes that all private hospitals with mental health beds should be accredited using these NSMHS as the core accreditation requirements.

Policy

Lived Experience Australia advocates for the following.

1. All private hospitals with mental health beds should be accredited against the National Standards for Mental Health Services, adopted September 2010.
2. The public should be informed of the level of accreditation awarded. In addition, a summary of the health service's quality outcomes should be accessible via the internet to enable consumers and carers to make an informed choice about the facility for care.
3. The engagement of consumer and carer surveyors to the survey team accrediting private mental health facilities.

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