

Information for GPs, paediatricians and private psychiatrists

Changes to mental health services at EMPHN

Eastern Melbourne PHN (EMPHN) is continuing to fund mental health services but in a different way. In January 2018, EMPHN started transitioning to its Mental Health Stepped Care Model in the north-east (stage one). Stage two will commence in the outer-east from July 2018.

Following the National Mental Health Commission's recommendations, and subsequent support of these recommendations by the Australian Government in 2015, PHNs around Australia have developed Mental Health Stepped Care Models in-line with nation-wide reform.

EMPHN's Mental Health Stepped Care Model provides a continuum of primary mental health services within a person-centred stepped care approach. The model emphasises collaborative care with a care team approach that includes working closely with the GP to ensure the patient's overall health and wellbeing is managed.

What is Mental Health Stepped Care?

Stepped care is an evidence-based, staged system of care that includes a range of mental health interventions, from the least to the most intensive, matched to the individual's needs.

- The multiple levels within a stepped care approach offer a spectrum of service interventions that incorporate existing, as well as a new range of modalities from eHealth to services delivered by peer workers, allied health professionals, psychologists and credentialed mental health nurses among others.
- The level of intensity of care should be matched to the complexity of the conditions experienced by any given patient, addressing mental health and associated needs including physical health, education and employment, alcohol and other drug harm reduction, family and social functioning, and suicide and self-harm reduction.

Why use a stepped care approach?

This approach will address some of the key issues and challenges in the mental health system by shifting the focus towards early intervention. Key areas EMPHN is seeking to address by implementing the model include:

- At the patient (individual) level, through active implementation of a patient-centred approach and a holistic assessment of needs.
- At the organisational/workforce level, through implementing a stepped care model that is easy to integrate with, work collaboratively with and navigate for providers. The stepped care model must ensure the provider workforce is delivering mental health services at the top of their scope.
- At the systems level, through improved referral pathway patient journeys, and through evidence-informed services delivered with cost effective use of resources.

When will the Mental Health Stepped Care Model be implemented?

- The model will be rolled-out in three geographical stages over a 12-month period.
- Service delivery has been operational since 15 January 2018 for the first stage in north east Melbourne (Whittlesea, Banyule, Nillumbik and parts of the shires of Mitchell and Murrindindi within the EMPHN catchment)
- Service delivery will be operational from 2 July 2018 for the second stage in outer east Melbourne (LGAs of Maroondah, Knox and Yarra Ranges)
- Service delivery will be operational from 14 January 2019 for the third stage in inner east Melbourne (LGAs of Boroondara, Manningham, Whitehorse and Monash).
- Following co-design and engagement with stakeholders for over a year to develop EMPHN's Mental Health Stepped Care Model, open tender processes have and are being undertaken to commission the stages of the model.

What is happening to the Mental Health Nursing Services and Psychological Strategies programs?

As part of the transition to the Mental Health Stepped Care Model, the programs of Mental Health Nursing Services (formerly MHNIP) and Psychological Strategies (formerly ATAPS) will end as the staged transition occurs. EMPHN is working with the mental health providers it contracts to plan for transition of patients to alternative care arrangements, including the new Mental Health Stepped Care Model.

The Mental Health Stepped Care Model will comprise a varied workforce, including psychologists, mental health nurses, social workers, occupational therapists, and peer workers among others. Services such as clinical care coordination and evidence based psychological interventions within a primary care setting will form part of the suite of services offered in the new Mental Health Stepped Care Model.

What is the eligibility criteria to access the Mental Health Stepped Care Model?

People of all ages who live or work in EMPHN's catchment, who are not able to afford or access similar services, are eligible to be considered for the Mental Health Stepped Care Model. The patient's mental health clinical stage (0-4) will be assessed based on information about their level of mental health symptoms, social and occupational functioning and other difficulties, and services will be offered matched to their level of need.

What is the role of GPs and other service providers in the new model?

EMPHN's Mental Health Stepped Care Model keeps general practice at the centre of the patient's care. When a patient is identified as requiring the support of multiple services, all service providers should come together with the patient and carer to establish agreed working practices and develop a Collaborative Care Plan.

During the transition, where can I get more information or find additional services to help my clients under the care of a mental health nurse or allied health professional commissioned by EMPHN?

GPs, private psychiatrists, paediatricians, allied health professionals, psychologists or mental health nurses can contact EMPHN's Referral and Access Team (P: 9800 1071) to discuss appropriate referral options for their clients. Referrals to the new Mental Health Stepped Care Model can be made via EMPHN's Mental Health Stepped Care Model providers or EMPHN's Referral and Access Team.

For further information:

EMPHN's Referral and Access Team
P: 9800 1071
www.emphn.org.au/mh-steppedcare
W: www.emphn.org.au

Banyule Community Health (Stage 1) LIFT Program
P: 9450 2005