

Qualifications and Professional Development for HACC Assessment Staff: Information Update December 2008

Introduction

The Framework for Assessment in the Home and Community Care Program was endorsed in June 2007. The first step in implementing the Framework was to designate 100 organisations as HACC Assessment Services. HACC Assessment Services are funded to provide Living at Home Assessments; a broad, holistic assessment of need, undertaken where possible in the client's home. Living at Home Assessments are delivered by HACC assessment staff.

As part of the development of the Assessment Framework, the HACC Assessment Professional Development Working Group met to develop recommendations regarding relevant qualifications and professional development for HACC assessment staff. The group was made up of representatives from the Department of Human Services, HACC Assessment Services and service provider peak organisations. The following information is drawn from their recommendations.

Relevant qualifications

HACC assessment staff play a key role in the HACC service system. Assessment is a critical factor in ensuring that clients and carers have a positive experience of the HACC program, as well as in managing client pathways in and out of the HACC service system and the broader health and community care system. Building skilled assessment will be a crucial aspect of meeting the Active Service Model's objective of promoting capacity building, restorative care and social inclusion to maintain or promote a person's capacity to live as independently as possible.

The Victorian HACC Program Manual states that funded organisations are responsible for ensuring that staff have the qualifications, skills and knowledge required for their role. As noted in the Assessment Framework it is expected that HACC assessment staff will have relevant higher education qualifications. What distinguishes relevant higher education qualifications is that they educate about client groups and practice interventions that are relevant to delivering Living at Home Assessments.

Since the composition and names of qualifications change over time, the following list is written generically. Relevant qualifications for HACC assessment staff include:

- Division 1 Nurse
- Qualifications recognised by the Australian Association of Social Workers
- Physiotherapy
- Occupational Therapy
- Dietetics
- Psychology
- Counselling degree
- Disability Studies
- Health Sciences (where the qualification is practice oriented, rather than population health oriented).

Not all recommended qualifications are undergraduate qualifications. Relevant postgraduate diplomas and certificates and masters degrees include:

- Disability Studies
- Aged Care/gerontology
- Counselling
- Case Management
- Complex Care
- Health Promotion
- Advanced Social Work Practice
- Social Work in Health or Mental Health
- Community Health Nursing.

Introducing the Vocational Graduate Certificate in Community Services Practice (Client Assessment and Case Management)

This new qualification is included in the CHC08 Community Services Training Package endorsed in December 2008. It is available to both university graduates and people with substantial industry experience and will provide a relevant qualification for HACC assessment staff. This is one of several new Vocational Graduate (that is, higher education) qualifications included in the CHC08 Community Services Training Package. The CHC08 package will commence implementation during 2009.

Moving to a workforce with relevant qualifications

While many HACC assessment staff have relevant qualifications, this is not currently the case for all staff. Current staffing composition and capacity to attract and retain staff with relevant qualifications varies between HACC Assessment Services. The Assessment Framework takes a capacity building approach, and acknowledges that many HACC Assessment Services will need to plan the transition to a workforce with relevant qualifications. This may include supporting staff to upgrade their qualifications, and aiming to employ staff with relevant qualifications in future recruitment.

Professional development for HACC assessment staff

Since the release of the HACC Assessment Framework there has been considerable interest from HACC Assessment Services in professional development for HACC assessment staff. In response, we are proposing to develop and deliver a professional development session to support HACC assessment staff in delivering Living at Home Assessments in line with the Assessment Framework and the Active Service Model. Focusing on intake, assessment, care planning and review, it will provide assessment staff with an opportunity to explore how professional and organisational practice can be further developed. The session will be delivered via the HACC Regional Training Calendars in mid 2009.

Further information

For further information, please contact your regional DHS contact or:

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The Municipal Association of Victoria has a project officer available to members for advice and support regarding the implementation of the Assessment Framework.

For further information, please contact:

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