



ACT Mental Health Consumer Network Inc.
The Griffin Centre, Level 2, Room 11
20 Genge Street, Canberra City, 2601
P.O.BOX 469, Civic Square, ACT, 2608
Phone: 02 6230 5796 Fax: 02 6230 5790
Email: policy@actmhcn.org.au
Website: www.actmhcn.org.au

Submission:

Canberra Health Services Operational Guideline Consumer Handouts

Submitted by email to:
Heather.Needham@act.gov.au
19 March 2021



Submission: Canberra Health Services Operational Guideline Consumer Handouts

This submission has been prepared by the ACT Mental Health Consumer Network in response to the invitation from Canberra Health Services (CHS).

The ACT Mental Health Consumer Network is a consumer-led peak organisation representing the interests of mental health consumers in the ACT in policy and decision-making forums. The Network is committed to social justice and the inclusion of people with experience of mental illness. Run by consumers for consumers, our aim is to advocate for services and supports for mental health consumers which better enable them to live fuller, healthier and more valued lives in the community.

The Network held a consumer forum and additionally sought feedback via email from consumers in relation to the CHS Operational Guideline Consumer Handouts draft document. This submission incorporates the feedback we received from these processes.

General comments

The Network welcomes this opportunity to contribute to the CHS Operational Guideline Consumer Handouts draft document. Consumer feedback supports an operational guideline for CHS employees. Feedback includes that this policy should ideally be written in plain language, that the final draft include relevant links to parts of the legislative documents referred to and a flow chart to outline the steps of each section within the draft. Consumers noted that the best test of clarity is to see if someone who has never developed a handout previously can navigate the process based on the document. From our review and testing the process, it would appear that the draft operational guideline meets its purpose.

This submission outlines recommended adjustments to the draft as included below.

Language, document layout and accessibility

Recommendation 1: The use of plain language throughout the policy

Consumers appreciate this policy may be written as an internal policy document but emphasise that it should be written in plain language to ensure ease of understanding for all staff.

Recommendation 2: Inclusion of a flow chart or diagram

Consumer's feel that inclusion of a flow chart or diagram of the process will support the guideline, particularly in relation to the writing stage. Consumer feedback included that having all the writing steps collated in one area may support the process.

Background

Recommendation 3: Insert text to read the guideline in full

Including text that stipulates that this document must be read in full prior to commencing the process of developing a consumer handout is recommended. Consumer feedback included there may be a risk of staff progressing to sections without reading the entire guideline, potentially leading to errors.

Alerts

Recommendation 4: All urgent handouts are time limited pre-endorsement by the Consumer Handouts Committee

Consumers consider the urgent handout development on page 2 needs expanding to ensure handouts are not published prior to endorsement by the Consumer Handouts Committee. The inclusion of the condition that handouts may not be professionally printed is recognised and supported but a further safeguard, such as a time restriction of three months, is recommended to ensure handouts do not proceed to print or remain long term in an electronic form. This time restriction should be included in electronic versions.

Conclusion and recommendations

The above recommendations are based on consumer feedback to enhance the draft document.

The recommendations outlined in this submission are included in short form below.

1. The use of plain language throughout the document
2. Inclusion of a flow chart or diagram
3. Insert text to read the guideline in full (Background, page 2)
4. All urgent handouts are time limited pre-endorsement by the Consumer Handouts Committee