

SOUND PRACTICE IN THE ABORIGINAL MENTAL HEALTH WORKER TRAINING PROGRAM

Below is a direct summary of recommended sound practice from the NSW Aboriginal Mental Health Worker Training Program Implementation Review¹. This appendix is aimed to be used as a guide to support you in your application process for the NGO Aboriginal Drug and Alcohol Traineeship Program .

The summary highlights four key topic areas for consideration from the implementation of the NSW Aboriginal Mental Health Worker Training Program.

It is recommended the full document is reviewed by applicants to inform the host organisation application process for the NGO Aboriginal Drug and Alcohol Traineeship Program.

Summary of sound practice in workplace preparation.

- It is important for managers to have a process for assessing a mental health team's capacity to incorporate a Trainee into the team to ensure the Trainee will be well supported.
- Mental Health Teams with the capacity to support a Trainee described the Trainee as fitting in with the overall work of the team. These teams had usually six or more staff, at least two of whom were senior (clinicians).
- Multidisciplinary teams were able to offer Trainees varied experiences and different occupational perspectives.
- Community Mental Health teams provided Trainees with the opportunity to observe the range of mental health services from prevention to acute care, home and in-patient visits.
- Support staff who had been briefed about the aim and objectives of the program, the role and expectations of the trainee and their roles and responsibilities in training and supporting the Trainee, reported more positive experiences than those who were not thoroughly briefed.
- In teams that had prepared an office space and identified support people beforehand, Trainees reported feeling welcomed and supported.

Summary of sound practice in Workplace Training and Support.

- The traineeship was working best in teams where the managers and team members understood the program aim, objectives and expectations.
- Managers that established clear boundaries around trainees could do at any given time of the traineeship provided a safe working environment.

¹ Watson, C & Harrison, N. 2009 New South Wales Aboriginal Mental Health Worker Training Program: Implementation Review, Cooperative Research Centre for Aboriginal Health, Darwin.

- Area Health Services that allocated experienced preceptors and clinical supervisors to the Trainees were providing a high level of on-the-training for the Trainees.
- A thorough orientation and induction process during the first three months provided a good foundation for Trainees to learn about mental health, the workplace and the related community organisations and services.
- The Aboriginal Mental Health Worker Training Program Manual was reported to be valuable in providing guidance.
- It was reported to be important for teams to know they had policy direction and support for the training program for the Minister, senior management, the State Wide Coordinator and the Reference Group.
- Area Health Services that established formal groups or mechanisms to guide the operation of the program were able to provide support both to the trainees and their managers.
- A wide range of informal supports were being provided to Trainees, or Trainees were organising them for themselves.
- Cultural mentors provided important additional support and guidance for Trainees inside and outside the workplace.
- Documentation of training and support activities, including time allocated to the Traineeship, was important for monitoring and evaluation.

Summary of Sound Practice in Combining Work and Study

- Having a preceptor, supervisor and team members who were available to discuss assignments directly assisted the Trainee in completing them and increased the knowledge and the university component of the Traineeship.
- The more managers, clinical supervisors and preceptors knew about the university's expectations the better they were able to support the Trainee.
- Having an allocated study day during the week between residential teaching blocks and resources such as a laptop computer enabled Trainees to more easily complete university requirements.
- Trainees who were able to organise a tutor reported that it had helped them with their time management and ability to understand and complete their assignments.
- Undertaking placements in the same geographical area in different health services, programs and AMSs contributed to building an understanding of the Training Program and strengthening links between services. It also decreased the Trainees' stress by not having to be away from family and support people.
- Having realistic expectations about what can be reasonably expected of a Trainee at each stage of [the] Traineeship was viewed as very useful by both Trainees and teams where they were applied.