
Indigenous Mental Health Intervention Program (IMHIP)

Initiative Type

Model of Care

Status

Deliver

Added

10 December 2018

Last updated

23 January 2025

URL

<https://cnxp3cuvtvrn68yjaibaht5ywrxspj7m.clinicalexcellence.qld.gov.au/improvement-exchange/indigenous-mental-health-intervention-program-imhip>

Summary

The Queensland Forensic Mental Health Service (QFMHS) has established the Indigenous Mental Health Intervention Programme (IMHIP), a multi-million-dollar Indigenous-led service delivered in custodial and transitional care settings. The novel programme provides for a partnership between Government and non-Government services to ensure continuity of culturally appropriate care in

custody and during transition to the community. The IMHIP is Australia's first Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-led, multidisciplinary, social and emotional wellbeing service for Indigenous people in custody. It provides early identification, in custody care and transitional support to connect individuals back to their community. This priority-driven service has been developed in partnership with Indigenous colleagues, communities and organisations to ensure that it is culturally informed. In addition to its client focus, IMHIP strives to develop the Indigenous workforce and support Indigenous leadership. The IMHIP service is developed from an understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander views of health and mental health, including the interconnections between spiritual, social, emotional, cultural and physical wellbeing, as such, the service model is holistic and more readily accessible. The team have incorporated a range of culturally valid outcome measures into routine practice and mental health applications delivered via Android tablet PC's. Evaluation findings indicate that the IMHIP approach is valued and that outcomes are positive and meaningful. The project won the Connecting Healthcare Category at the 2018 Queensland Health Awards for Excellence.

Key dates

Dec 2014

Dec 2017

Partnerships

Prison Mental Health Services (PMHS), The Institute for Urban Indigenous Health (IUHI), Queensland Corrective Services.

Key Contacts

Dr Ed Heffernan

2039

paul.blee.hiu

Forensic Mental Health Service Director, Forensic Mental Health Service

Metro North Hospital and Health Service

(07) 3837 5820

Aim

Reduce the morbidity, mortality, relapse and return to custody risks while developing the Indigenous workforce and supporting Indigenous leadership.

Benefits

- ensure continuity of culturally appropriate care in custody and during transition to the community
- reduced morbidity, mortality, relapse and return to custody risks

Background

The Queensland Forensic Mental Health Service (QFMHS) are recognised leaders in the area of Indigenous mental health in the criminal justice system. It is in this critical area of health that the service has undertaken an extensive and growing program of service development and research. This priority driven work has been done in partnership with Indigenous colleagues, communities and organisations to ensure that the contribution has been meaningful to Indigenous people and culturally informed.

Evaluation and Results

The mental health of Indigenous people in the criminal justice system is a public health priority and a key social justice concern. Comprising three per cent of the total population, Indigenous people represent approximately 29 per cent of Australia's prison population (ABS, 2016). Indigenous prisoners have more frequent and earlier contact with the criminal justice system, higher rates of unemployment, lower level of education, are more likely to have been placed in care as a child and have experienced parental incarceration (Heffernan, Andersen & Kinner, 2009). Indigenous people in custody suffer from complex and co-occurring health problems, often intertwined with broader social and emotional wellbeing challenges (Butler et al., 2005).

Further Reading

[The Queensland Centre for Mental Health Research](#)

PDF saved 04/04/2025