

## Mental Health Services in Correctional Centres

Queensland Health (QH) is responsible for providing health services for people in all correctional centres in Queensland. These services include primary health care, mental health, oral health, in-patient and specialist out-patient services.

The aim is to provide services commensurate to what is available in the community, noting that there will need to be some variation in how these services are delivered due to the needs of patients in the custody, limitations in the ability of prisoners to be able to access private health care services, and the correctional centre environment.

### How are mental health services delivered in correctional centres?

Mental health services available to people in correctional centres are equivalent to mental health services in the wider community. Primary health care services deliver low intensity services for people experiencing mild to moderate symptoms and specialist services (Specialist Prison Mental Health Services) support people with the more severe forms of mental illness and associated behavioural disturbance.

### Mental health within primary care

For many people in prison, their mental health needs can be managed by primary health care services. Mental health services provided by primary care are low intensity services characterised by one or more of the following factors:

- for patients
  - who experience mild to moderate symptoms that affects their relationships or lifestyle in prison
  - with symptoms that are likely to be short in duration or episodic
  - experiencing single/sole conditions (not complicated with comorbidities or complex symptomology)
- for conditions
  - likely to respond to established treatments
  - that can be treated quickly with brief or low-cost interventions
  - that can be easily managed through an ambulatory model of care and do not require specialist input, i.e., can be managed by a medical officer and/or a registered nurse

The role of primary care in provision of mental health care is to:

- screen and assess patients for mental illness, alcohol and other drug misuse
- exclude conditions that may manifest as a mental illness
- treat patients at risk of or experiencing a non-complex mental health condition
- evaluate the effectiveness of treatment
- liaise and collaborate with Specialist Prison Mental Health Services and Queensland Corrective Services Psychological Services particularly for patients at risk of suicide or self-harm
- refer, liaise and collaborate with the Indigenous Mental Health Intervention Program (IMHIP) service
- refer patients to Specialist Prison Mental Health Services who are:
  - experiencing complex and/or severe mental health problems

- not responding to treatment
- require intensive specialist treatment
- may require in-patient mental health services
- liaise with community primary health services for patients who are about to be released from prison to ensure continuity of care
- participate in case conferences regarding prisoners of concern

## Specialist prison mental health services

Specialist Prison Mental Health Services provide specialised assessment, treatment, and rehabilitation services to reduce symptoms of mental illness and facilitate recovery. These services are focused primarily on providing care to people with the most severe forms of mental illness and associated behavioural disturbances, and those under the provisions of the *Mental Health Act 2016*.

Specialist Prison Mental Health Services are multidisciplinary ambulatory services that provide assessment and treatment for people who are living with major or severe mental illness. These services and their patient cohort are characterised by:

- Patients
  - who are experiencing active severe symptoms likely to be associated with a mental illness
  - with symptoms that are likely to be chronic or resistant to treatment provided by primary healthcare services
  - with complex, atypical symptomology, or a complex mental illness history
- Conditions that require intensive interventions, including but not limited to an inpatient stay in an Authorised Mental Health Service.

The role of Specialist Prison Mental Health Services is to:

- provide multidisciplinary assessment and treatment for people with severe mental illness
- treat people at risk of or experiencing complex mental illnesses
- provide consultation and liaison services to primary health care services and Queensland Corrective Service's Psychological Services for complex patients that require a multi-agency/services response
- receive referrals from primary health care services, Queensland Corrective Service's Psychological Services, family members, community organisations, legal representatives and self-referral from prisoners
- collaborate with IMHIP service (site specific) for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples who are shared care clients (open to PMHS and IMHIP) or for those considered for closure to PMHS regarding ongoing support and transitional coordination
- collaborate effectively with QCS in providing care to people who have or may have mental illness, including through case conferences regarding prisoners of concern
- liaise with Authorised Mental Health Services for patients that may require in-patient services
- support patients transitioning from custody and on release, as prioritised through team reviews and discussions
- liaise with government and non-government agencies involved in the Transitions From Corrections programs for patients approaching release from prison to ensure continuity of care
- liaise with community mental health services for patients who are about to be released from prison to ensure continuity of care.

## Queensland Corrective Services – Psychological Services

QCS psychologists at correctional centres provide a range of services to people in custody, including:

- conduct risk assessment of harm to self, and assist with the prevention and safe management of suicide and self-harm behaviour via evidence-based intervention
- conduct assessment of psychopathology, behaviour of concern, psychosocial needs and protective factors to inform interventions, referrals and individual management strategies
- conduct psychometric assessment of cognitive functioning, memory, personality and mental health to determine treatment needs
- provide psychoeducation on mental health conditions, symptoms and treatment options
- deliver individual or group-based interventions aimed at developing coping skills and building resilience
- deliver staff training on prisoner mental health issues and suicide prevention
- facilitate referrals where required and liaise with Queensland Health staff in relation to the management of significant psychiatric conditions

## How can someone access mental health services in prison?

Mental health services in prison operate on an open referral system.

### On reception

Each prisoner is screened on reception by Queensland Health Prison Health Service staff to determine health services the person requires including if they require support for a mental health condition. In addition, Queensland Corrective Services Psychological Services conducts assessments to determine safety risks. If a prisoner is identified as at risk or has a mental health condition that requires treatment Prison Health Services or Queensland Corrective Services Psychological Services will make a referral to the entity or entities best placed to provide the support and assistance that the prisoner requires.

### During the custodial episode

During the prisoner's period of custody, he or she can make a request for support via the usual medical request process within the correctional centre. These medical requests are assessed by primary healthcare service staff who will refer the patient to the service that is best positioned to respond to the patient's needs.

### What services are not included in Prison Mental Health Services?

Correctional centres in Queensland do not have hospital or mental health beds. If a person requires in-patient mental health care, including involuntary treatment under the *Mental Health Act 2016* they are transferred to an in-patient mental health unit.