

Service standards for mental health services

The National Standards for Mental Health Services were developed during the first decade of the NMHS.¹⁸ These service standards are comprehensive, and designed to promote care, treatment and support that are respectful of consumers' rights and in line with international standards for quality. Six principles underpin the standards:

- choice — access to a range of specialised mental health treatment and support options and information to assist in the selection of the most appropriate option(s) in the setting most empowering for the consumer;
- social, cultural and developmental context — specialised mental health treatment and support services respect and use the consumer's social and cultural values, beliefs, practices and stage of development;
- continuous and coordinated care — specialised mental health treatment and support services are provided in a continuous and coordinated manner by a range of service providers in and between settings;
- comprehensive care — access to high-quality mental health treatment and support services is available throughout the consumer's lifespan and is able to meet their specific needs during the onset, acute, rehabilitation, consolidation and recovery phases of their mental illness;
- individual care — specialised mental health treatment and support are tailor made for each individual; and
- least restriction — specialised mental health treatment and support imposes the least restriction on the rights and choices of the consumer while balancing the need for treatment.

The standards are being used by accreditation agencies to review mental health services, and the majority of services have been, or are being reviewed against the standards. In line with the principles of continuous quality improvement, the rollout of these standards continues. The standards are currently undergoing revision.