

New Framework for Assessment in the Home and Community Care Program in Victoria

June 2007

Introduction

The new Framework for Assessment in the HACC Program in Victoria has been finalised and is available on the Victorian HACC Program web site under 'What's New' www.health.vic.gov.au/hacc

The Victorian HACC Assessment Framework sets out the revised program policy for Assessment as a HACC funded activity. It details the requirements for the delivery of **Living at Home Assessments** which include home-based holistic assessment of need and service-specific assessments as key components.

The Framework also describes related processes such as Client Care Coordination and Supported Access. Both of these processes are critical adjuncts to Assessment for specific client groups.

Client Care Coordination is provided for a sub-set of HACC clients with complex needs or circumstance who require a service response from more than one agency, including inter-agency care planning. **Supported Access** describes the role that ethno-specific, multicultural and Aboriginal organisations play in supporting clients to access mainstream services. There will be a number of pilot projects in 2007-08 that will explore the supported access process. See *Future Directions for culturally appropriate access to HACC Program core services* http://health.vic.gov.au/hacc/projects/cegs_future.htm.

The goal of the HACC Assessment Framework is to support and build good practice in delivering Living at Home assessments and to support designated HACC Assessment Services to build alliances with other key providers of assessment such as ACAS, Community Health and agencies providing Supported Access. These alliances will ensure a more coordinated and streamlined approach to Assessment based on a person-centred approach.

Good assessment processes in the HACC Program and strong links with key health and community care organisations are critical if the HACC Program is to efficiently manage client pathways, provide well targeted service responses and refocus the model of service delivery towards a more active model that aims to maintain and improve client independence wherever possible.

The Framework replaces Section 7.3 Assessment and Care Management in the Victorian HACC Program Manual.

Framework development

The Framework is based on recommendations from the *Strategic Directions in Assessment Victorian Home and Community Care Program, Final Report* (Howe and Warren, 2005). Development was guided by the HACC Assessment Reference Group and by submissions received on the draft Assessment Framework which was released for consultation in September 2006.

The Framework has taken some time to develop due to the parallel work on assessment and access occurring at the National level. This work stems from the February 2006 COAG agreement 'that there be simplified entry and assessment processes for the Home and Community Care Program'

which is closely linked with work the Commonwealth Department of Health and Ageing is pursuing as set out in 'A New Strategy for Community Care – The Way Forward'.

It is critical that Victoria's developments in assessment and access are in line with national policy directions. This is the key reason why finalisation of the HACC Assessment Framework in Victoria has been delayed.

Access to services in Victoria

Currently, people seeking HACC services in Victoria can enter the system and get a service response through any HACC funded organisation in the first instance ('no wrong door') and/or be directed to organisations that can meet any other identified needs. This approach to access will remain a feature of the HACC program and the community care sector more generally as a result of the Primary Care Partnerships and the implementation of service coordination.

The high level objective for Access Points is that they should be marketed and visible points where people can go if they are seeking services but do not know what is available or what they may be able to get access to.

From Victoria's perspective this fundamental objective for Access Points complements the work that has been done in implementing the Primary Care Partnerships - *Better Access to Services Policy and Operational Framework*. In Victoria the primary goal of Access Points is to improve navigation of the service system for frail older people, younger people with disabilities, their carers, families and friends and service providers.

Two key pieces of work are currently underway to progress this goal:

- i. a Mapping Project, and
- ii. the development of 2 Demonstration Projects.

A joint letter from both the Commonwealth Department of Health and Ageing and the Victorian Department of Human Services is being sent to all organisations shortly describing progress with this work.

Assessment Framework Implementation

Implementation will occur over a two year period.

The first step is to formally identify HACC organisations that are currently funded for Assessment and that have the commitment and capacity to meet the criteria to deliver Living at Home assessments. The criteria for designating HACC Assessment Services are detailed in Part 3 of the Framework.

Local councils are currently the largest providers of Assessment in the HACC Program. Discussions to date with the Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV) confirm the sector's commitment to the role. Nursing agencies such as RDNS are also key providers of Assessment in the HACC Program as are Community Health Services in some regions, and this is likely to continue.

In some rural regions a relatively large number of HACC organisations currently receive Assessment funding. DHS regional offices will initiate discussions with organisations in their regions to identify new approaches that meet the requirement of the Framework.

Once we have a group of agencies that are designated HACC Assessment Services, we can then work with these organisations (and other relevant organisations) to develop the next key pieces of work in the implementation process. These are:

- The development of a funding model for Living at Home assessments– this work has already begun and should be completed within a year.
- Developing a HACC Assessment tool based on national and state screening tools (Australian Community Care Needs Assessment and the Victorian Service Coordination Tool Templates).
- Continue to work on a Professional Development Strategy for HACC Assessment staff.
- Develop and pilot the Supported Access activity in order to support CALD and ATSI clients to access mainstream services.

Growth to Assessment as a HACC funded activity will occur through the allocation of HACC growth funds. Assessment will continue to be a priority for growth into the future.

The HACC Program is committing non-recurrent funds to support implementation:

- Deb Warren has been seconded in to the HACC and Assessment Unit for two years to support the HACC Assessment Framework and Access Points implementation
- DHS has provided funding to MAV for 2 years to employ Derryn Wilson to support the implementation of the HACC Assessment Framework and the development of the Active Service model.

DHS is working collaboratively with MAV to develop a common implementation work program for the Assessment Framework. The HACC Assessment Reference Group will be reconvened to guide the implementation process. This governance structure should ensure that implementation processes are clear and transparent and meets the needs of all stakeholders.

In addition it is anticipated that there will be non-recurrent seed funding available in 2007-08 to fund projects which support the development of alliances, define state-wide protocols and client pathways for assessment and where feasible, explore new models of delivering assessment to ensure a coordinated and streamlined approach.

Next steps

July-December 2007: DHS Regional staff will contact HACC organisations currently funded for Assessment to discuss their commitment and capacity to meet the criteria to be designated as a HACC Assessment Service. Following discussions targeted organisations will be invited to formally demonstrate their capacity and commitment by providing detailed documentation of their current capacity, practices and processes and/or commitment to developing key strategies that will meet each of the criteria in the future. This process will occur between July and December 2007.

DHS Regional staff will discuss with organisations receiving small amounts of assessment funds, that do not meet the criteria to be a designated HACC Assessment Service, opportunities for refocussing these funds to other HACC activities.

All organisations currently receiving HACC Assessment funding will receive a letter from their DHS regional office detailing the processes, time frames for designating agencies as HACC Assessment Services, including regional information sessions.

January 2008: Once the status of organisations currently funded for Assessment is known, other agencies that believe they meet the criteria will be able to discuss their potential to be designated as a HACC Assessment Service within the context of the regional planning process. Opportunities for organisations such as Community Health Services to form partnerships with existing HACC Assessment Services can also be explored at this stage.

Further information on the HACC Assessment Framework will be published on the HACC Program website over the coming weeks. www.health.vic.gov.au/hacc/assessment

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