

The provision of culturally secure services in rural and remote Western Australia

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Background

Providing culturally secure services is a way to ensure that all Australians have access to safe and effective services. The Western Australian Network of Alcohol and other Drug Agencies (WANADA) recognises the role that culturally secure practice plays in delivering successful outcomes. To support the alcohol and other drug sector to deliver culturally secure services an accreditation standard was developed. This standard is the first to focus on cultural security and has since been implemented by services across Western Australia including rural and remote regions of the Pilbara, Kimberley, Mid West, Goldfields, Great Southern, South West and Wheatbelt.

For the purpose of the Standard, the term 'cultural security' is applied broadly and in a way that is relevant to the culture of the consumer group accessing the service. This broad application can include cultural groups such as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, youth, women, culturally and linguistically diverse, injecting drug users and the LGBTQ (gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and queer) communities.

The purpose of the Standard is to support and promote continuous quality improvement processes. Continuous quality improvement in health care refers to a 'continuous and ongoing effort to achieve measurable improvements in the efficiency, effectiveness, performance, accountability, outcomes and other indicators of quality in services or processes which achieve equity and improve the health of the community'.¹

Standards development process

WANADA received funding from the Office for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health (OATSIH) and the WA Mental Health Commission (formerly the Drug and Alcohol Office of WA) to further develop the *Western Australian Alcohol and other Drug Sector Quality Framework* to a culturally secure, nationally recognised accreditation framework. The accreditation framework, referred to as the *Standard on Culturally Secure Practice (Alcohol and other Drug Sector)*², is intended to provide a sector-specific, culturally secure alternative accreditation process for alcohol and other drug services across Australia. The Standard was developed in consultation with the Western Australian alcohol and other drug sector, and with Indigenous alcohol and other drug services Australia-wide.

Application of the Standard

The Standard is registered by the Joint Accreditation System of Australia and New Zealand (JAS-ANZ). The Standard is audited by JAS-ANZ accredited independent certification bodies. The Standard, like all JAS-ANZ standards focus on continuous quality improvement. The Standard has been developed to be flexible enough to be applied across a diverse range of human services.

The WANADA *Standard on Culturally Secure Practice* includes a range of performance expectations that are categorised into 'essential' and 'good practice' criteria.

To achieve accreditation 80% of essential criteria under each performance expectation must be met. Agencies can then choose whether to seek good practice certification. Good practice certification will be awarded if agencies meet 80% of the *good practice* criteria under each nominated performance expectation, in addition to the already achieved *essential* criteria.

There is a range of resources and support offered by WANADA to assist agencies to become certification ready. These include the:

- *Interpretive Guide to the Standard on Culturally Secure Practice* which assists agencies to achieve certification by providing examples of how to interpret and apply the Standard.
- *Gap Analysis Tool* which is an effective tool for assisting agencies to complete a self-assessment to identify gaps and implement quality improvements.
- For WANADA member agencies, WANADA can undertake site visits to member agencies. This is guided by the agency's needs and tailored to what they would find most useful.

In the past WANADA has supported agencies located in rural and remote communities including Derby in the Kimberley region and Tom Price, South Hedland, Newman, Roebourne and Karratha in the Pilbara region of Western Australia.

Current accreditation landscape

Accreditation is an important step in improving the quality of health services and in ultimately improving the health of communities. However, accreditation should be considered only as part of an integrated system of tools and approaches to improve health practice.³

The *Standard on Culturally Secure Practice* is a means of supporting culturally secure service provision in Western Australian and other parts of Australia where it is applied. Currently there are twelve agencies accredited against the Standard. This includes services in rural and remote regions of Western Australia including those in the Pilbara, Goldfields, Kimberley, Mid West, Wheatbelt, Great Southern and South West, as well as Far North Queensland.

Health and social benefits of culturally secure standards

When exploring the performance expectations of the WANADA *Standard on Culturally Secure Practice* it becomes evident how achieving accreditation against the Standard can positively impact the health and social wellbeing of communities. The performance expectations of the Standard include a focus on:

1. **Defining and understanding the target community.** This performance expectation requires agencies to understand the cultural needs of its target community and have strategies in place to meet identified community needs.
2. **Rights and responsibilities.** This performance expectation requires agencies to demonstrate they recognise consumers as 'health consumers' with related rights and responsibilities. This includes the agency having a formulated statement of consumer rights and responsibilities, which are provided to consumers and discussed with them so they

understand what they can expect of the agency as early as possible in their intake. The service would also ensure all staff are aware of and support the rights and responsibilities of consumers. This performance expectation also requires agencies to have written and systematically reviewed policies, procedures and structures in place that guide consumer rights and responsibilities.

3. **Consumer focused practice.** This performance expectation requires agencies to encourage consumer participation and consider feedback from consumers on an ongoing basis to inform planning and development on non-discriminatory practice. This includes agencies encouraging and enabling the active involvement of consumers in decision-making, service planning and development. This also includes agencies performing ongoing assessment of consumer needs and satisfaction, and utilising feedback to review practice with an aim to improving outcomes.
4. **Evidence-based practice.** This performance expectation requires agencies to ensure consumers are well informed of the service options available to them, and to ensure that consumers receive a coordinated and appropriately planned service in accordance with evidence based practice that is negotiated with the individual and provided by appropriately experienced staff to best meet the consumer's needs.
5. **Staffing, development and support.** This performance expectation requires agencies to provide adequate and appropriate staffing, development and support for maximum effectiveness of service delivery. This includes ensuring all staff have appropriate knowledge, skills and experience. Agencies are also required to have written personnel and team development policies, procedures and strategies, which are regularly reviewed for maximum effectiveness. As well as this, agencies need to demonstrate their compliance with their State/Territory occupational health and safety and equal opportunity/anti-discrimination legislation.
6. **Agency management.** This performance expectation requires agencies to have management practices that maximise organisational efficiency and effectiveness and ensure accountability. This includes contractual compliance, defined and documented roles and responsibilities, financial management, risk management, human resource management policies and procedures, data management, organisational planning processes, and partnership/integration.
7. **Organisational governance.** This performance expectation requires agencies to demonstrate that their governance practices maximise organisational transparency, effectiveness and ensure accountability and compliance with legislation.

WANADA has a strong commitment to promote, support and encourage culturally secure practice and quality in the provision of alcohol and other drug services. The development of the WANADA *Standard on Culturally Secure Practice* and the support provided by WANADA to their member agencies to achieve accreditation against the Standard is a demonstration of WANADA's commitment to continuous quality improvement in the human services sector.

References

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Presenter

Vanessa Vidler is Project Officer and Quality Manager at the Western Australian Network of Alcohol and other Drug Agencies (WANADA), the peak body representing alcohol and other drug education, prevention, treatment and support services in WA. WANADA is an independent, membership-driven, not-for-profit organisation that takes a whole of community approach to alcohol and other drug issues. WANADA developed the Standard on Culturally Secure Practice, an accreditation standard that is internationally recognised and endorsed by JAS-ANZ, as part of its work to support and enhance quality processes for alcohol and other drug services. Cultural security is an essential requirement of the Standard, which can be applied in various community service settings. Vanessa now works to support alcohol and other drug services to undertake service improvement activities and to achieve accreditation against the WANADA Standard on Culturally Secure Practice. In 2015, Vanessa completed a secondment in the Pilbara region of WA, and has provided support visits to health services throughout the state. This work has provided Vanessa with valuable insight into how the Standard can be applied. Vanessa holds a Master in Nutrition and Dietetics from Edith Cowan University, which closely aligns with WANADA's vision for a human services sector that significantly improves the health and wellbeing of individuals, families and communities impacted by alcohol and other drugs.