

Asking young people in mental health services how they are going

Information for parents and caregivers about measuring outcomes.

The Department of Health is responsible for planning and funding public mental health services across Tasmania. We want to continually improve the results (or 'outcomes') for people who use these services.

In order to find out what these outcomes are, we now ask consumers to describe their mental health when they start using the service and also when they leave. By comparing the answers we can learn about what has changed. We call this 'outcome measurement'.

Measuring outcomes can give consumers, their families and carers an extra opportunity to participate in planning treatment and care.

Understanding what works in mental health also helps the young person's clinician and us in planning and providing quality services.

What are outcome measures?

Outcome measures are questionnaires that are used to assess the mental health and wellbeing of children and young persons who use a public mental health service. These questionnaires are completed when the child or young person starts using the service and when treatment ends. If the child or young person remains involved with the mental health service for a longer period, then the questionnaires are filled out again each time the child's individual Comprehensive Care plan is reviewed. The individual Comprehensive Care plan is the document that guides treatment and care.

Why measure outcomes?

By comparing these questionnaire ratings over time, the clinician or doctor will be able to see to what extent aspects of the child or

young person's mental health have improved - or in which areas further treatment or support may be required.

Who fills out these questionnaires?

Outcome measurement ratings are made routinely by the doctor or clinician. They can also be completed by young persons aged 11-24

years. In addition, the parents or caregivers for children aged 0-17 years, or teachers of school age children can also be invited to give their perspective.

How can I take part?

For Children and Young people aged 0-17 years you will be offered an outcome measurement called the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (the SDQ).

You will probably be offered the opportunity to complete the SDQ when you first make contact with the mental health service assisting the child or young person in your care and on discharge from the service.

You may then be offered the SDQ again at regular intervals of no less than 3 months.

Young people aged 18 years or over will be offered an outcome measure called a BASIS-32.

What does the SDQ ask?

The SDQ covers a range of important issues, such as how the child or young person has felt about themselves or related to others.

It consists of around 30 statements such as 'Nervous or clingy in new situations' and 'Shares readily with others'.

For most of these statements you are asked whether you think they are 'not true', 'somewhat true' or 'certainly true' for the child or young person in your care.

There are separate versions of the SDQ for young persons, parents/caregivers and teachers.

What does the Basis-32 ask?

The Basis-32 for young people aged 18+ asks 32 questions to determine how the young person rates their difficulties and symptoms. These range from no difficulty, little difficulty, moderate difficulty, quite a bit difficulty and extreme difficulty.



Do I have to fill out these forms?

No. Participation in outcome measurement is voluntary. You can choose whether you want to complete it each time it is offered.

If you do complete the questionnaire, your answers will provide the clinician with important information that can be used in developing or reviewing their individual care plan.

How do I complete these forms?

For each statement, tick the box that best describes how things have been. This is not a test: there is no right or wrong answer. Your views are valued and will be sought and considered on a regular basis.

The first time you complete the outcome measure the clinician will tell you over which time period to respond about.

What happens to the completed questionnaire?

When you have completed the outcome measure, you can discuss your responses and/or progress with your clinician.

The completed outcome measure goes on the child or young person's confidential file. Your answers are also entered into the confidential database of the mental health service, so ratings can be compared over time.

What about confidentiality?

All the questionnaires you fill out become part of the child or young person's confidential file record. They are subject to the same strict standards of privacy protection and access that apply to other personal information disclosed during treatment.

How will the child or young person benefit from outcome measurement?

By providing the clinician with additional information from your perspective, you can make sure that they have a good sense of what's happening in the child or young person's life right now. Outcome measurements can help to provide a framework for discussions with the clinician and a focus on areas that matter to the child or young person. The information you provide by completing the outcome measure will also help to make sure that issues that matter to the child or young person can be identified upfront. These can then be taken into account in planning or reviewing their treatment and care, as well as any referrals to support services.

What if I have other issues?

You can discuss this flyer or any broader issues with the doctor, clinician or other staff at the mental health service.

Some useful contacts

Clinician/doctor _____

Telephone _____

Other _____

Telephone _____



Department of Health 1300 135 513

www.health.tas.gov.au

Statewide Mental Health Service welcomes feedback from clients, carers, and family members to help us improve care. Talk to one of our team, fill in consumer feedback form.

The Tasmanian Health Service integrates acute, primary and community services. This integration has given service providers the flexibility to ensure people have the best services we can provide, as close as possible to where they live.

Statewide Mental Health Services deliver consumer centred services focused on improving health outcomes. Our services include inpatient facilities and community teams.

