

Working together.
Working better.



SOCIAL WORKERS

FACT SHEET

What is a Mental Health Social Worker?

Mental Health Social Workers are registered providers with Medicare Australia. They have been assessed by the Australian Association of Social Workers (AASW) as having specialist mental health expertise.

An accredited Mental Health Social Worker in private practice is eligible to provide services through the Commonwealth-funded **Better Access to Mental Health Care** and **Chronic Disease Management (Enhanced Primary Care)** programs. Social Workers are also providers in the **Access to Allied Psychological Services (ATAPS)** program.

Mental Health Social Workers have a breadth of experience in assessing and working effectively with people experiencing:

- Depression and other mood disorders
- Anxiety disorders
- Psychosis
- Relationship problems
- Adjustment issues
- Family conflicts
- Personality disorders
- Suicidal thoughts
- Life crises
- Trauma

Mental Health Social Workers help individuals with mental health disorders to resolve associated psychosocial problems and improve their quality of life. This may involve family as well as individual counseling, and group therapy. Social Workers recognise the broader implications of an individual having a mental illness and the impact on friends, family, work and education.

Like other allied health professionals, such as psychologists, Mental Health Social Workers use a range of interventions in helping people with mental health disorders, including the following focussed psychological strategies:

Cognitive behavioural therapy

- Behavioural interventions
- Cognitive interventions

Relaxation strategies

Interpersonal therapy

Narrative therapy

Psycho-education (including motivational interviewing)

Skills training

- Problem solving
- Anger management
- Social skills
- Stress management
- Parenting skills

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FACT SHEET (cont.)

When should I refer to a Mental Health Social Worker?

People frequently seek the assistance of their General Practitioner when they are feeling anxious or depressed; distressed by a relationship or life crisis; experience suicidal thoughts or have other mental health concerns.

GPs are often in the best position to assess the most appropriate psychological therapy to improve their patient's mental health.

Mental Health Social Workers have particular expertise in helping individuals whose mental health disorders co-exist with other problems such as family distress, drug and alcohol abuse, unemployment, disability, poverty and trauma. They seek to identify factors influencing the person's mental health problems and focus on building on strengths and augmenting social supports.

Mental Health Social Workers are experienced in working collaboratively with other health professionals.

How do I refer?

Under Government mental health care programs, the first step is for you to formulate a GP Mental Health Treatment Plan for your patient. You are eligible for a rebate fee from Medicare to enable you to complete this Plan (Item 2710). Once Medicare is billed for Item 2710, this activates any referral.

A written referral letter is required (as you would normally do in referring to a specialist) for your patient who can then contact a Mental Health Social Worker to arrange an appointment.

What feedback will I get?

It is a requirement of these programs that GPs are provided with a written report providing information on:

- Assessments carried out
- Treatment provided, and
- Recommendations for future management

How can I find a Mental Health Social Worker?

Your local **Division of General Practice** will have a list of Mental Health Social Workers in your area, or

You can find a list of Mental Health Social Workers in your area on www.aasw.asn.au

More information about Mental Health Social Workers

Contact the **Australian Association of Social Workers** on:

Phone: (03) 9326 2377

Website: www.aasw.asn.au

Email: mentalhealth@asw.asn.au