

The Role of Psychologists in Families SA

This document should be read in conjunction with the documents concerning the role of the Principal Aboriginal Consultant and the role of the Principal Social Worker.

Psychological Services is part of the Statewide Services Directorate. Psychological Services provides psychological assessments, interventions, and consultation and training services for Families SA. Clinical Psychologists are employed to provide direct services to clients in the Northern, Southern, Country and Youth Justice Directorates. In addition, Psychological Services also has input into other areas such as Adoptions, the Refugee Program and the Policy and Planning Directorate.

What can Clinical Psychologists offer?

Clinical Psychologists offer a range of assessment, intervention, and consultation services designed to address the psychological needs of Families SA clients and inform decisions around how best to meet these needs. Clinical Psychologists have specialist training in the areas of child and adult mental health.

Key activities undertaken by Clinical Psychologist in this regard include, but are not limited to:

- Psychological assessments and written reports regarding children and their families. Consideration is given to information from a number of sources, such as: historical information and previous reports; interviews and observations of relevant family members and significant others; psychometric assessment of relevant parties that includes the use of questionnaires and tests when necessary; interviews with other professionals involved with the child/family; and current research and literature. Assessments may address issues such as:
 - the impact of abuse and/or neglect on a child's emotional, behavioural, social, developmental or intellectual, and educational functioning;
 - a child's therapeutic needs;
 - the ability of the child's parents to provide adequate care and protection for the child (ie parenting capacity), including the assessment of parental mental health and their capacity to change;
 - the nature of the attachment relationships between the child, their family and significant others; and
 - a child's future care needs and family contact arrangements.
- The completion of Youth Court ordered assessments of young offenders, considering issues such as suicidal ideation and recidivism.
- Consultation regarding issues that may impact on a child's psychological wellbeing such as:
 - Placement needs or concerns
 - Transition planning
 - Family contact needs
 - Reunification viability and planning
 - Consideration of other person guardianship
 - Responding to children's trauma and managing behaviour
 - The need for further assessment.

- Baseline assessments of the developmental or intellectual, educational, emotional and behavioural functioning of children placed under Guardianship of the Minister orders.
- Therapeutic input for children and their caregivers, either via the provision of a direct therapeutic service, or indirectly through consultation with carers and direct care staff.
- Liaison with other agencies.
- Policy and practice guidance and input regarding psychological issues on working groups or steering committees.
- Training and professional development for Families SA staff and others regarding psychological issues.

What can Principal Clinical Psychologists (AHP4s) offer?

The PCP in each directorate:

- Receives and allocates all referrals for psychological assessment and therapy from District Centres;
- Helps clarify when psychological assessments are needed and the nature and scope of referral questions;
- Manages the outsourcing of referrals as required;
- Provides direct supervision to the Clinical Psychologists undertaking assessment and therapeutic work;
- Provides psychological assessment and consultation services regarding highly complex, sensitive and/or controversial cases, potentially by participation in case conferences and case planning meetings and by assisting with decision making;
- Works in partnership with PSWs and PACs regarding case management and clinical practice issues as they pertain to the delivery of psychological services;
- Monitors practice standards in the overall planning and coordination of psychological services and provides consultation regarding any aspect of Clinical Psychology;
- Strives to ensure that Clinical Psychologists provide culturally sensitive assessments, that are consistent with the Clinical Guidelines for Undertaking Psychological Assessments with Aboriginal Families within Families SA;
- Provides relevant formal and informal training to staff and carers;
- Provides input into the development of policy and procedures; and
- Represents Psychological Services on Directorate Leadership groups and other groups, committees and working parties.

The Role of Senior Clinical Psychologists (AHP3s):

Each Senior Clinical Psychologist undertakes a quality assurance role within the psychology teams and assists in mentoring, teaching and leading new staff and students. Senior Clinical Psychologists have direct involvement in complex cases, co-work with the Clinical Psychologists when necessary, and often represent Psychological Services on working groups or in other forums. The Seniors may also take a lead in a particular area of psychological practice that is consistent with the aims and goals of the team and Psychological Services. In the absence of a Clinical Psychologist, Seniors may also provide direct psychological advice/input on cases to an office or Unit.

Psychological Services' requests of referring staff

Referring staff can valuably assist Psychological Services in its work by adhering to the following guidelines for practice:

- Please contact a Psychologist to discuss referrals prior to their submission, particularly in complex cases.
- Ensure that all referrals are accompanied by ALL relevant background information, including previous psychological or CPS reports, Applications for Orders, Case Plans, reports from other agencies including Centacare, DASSA and mental health services. Offices currently using C3MS do not need to include documentation available electronically.
- When reports are required urgently, please submit the referral and accompanying documents as soon as possible. Please be mindful that due to many competing priorities, even urgent psychological assessments usually require *at least* four weeks from the receipt of referral to complete a report, depending on other competing priorities, the number of children and adults involved, and the complexity of referral questions.
- If psychological advice is sought (via assessment reports or opinions), please give significant consideration to implementing any recommendations provided, or have a clear and defensible rationale for any decision not to implement a recommendation.
- Provide psychologists with feedback about case outcomes.
- When a Psychologist is consulted, please indicate how the information will be documented (such as quoting a verbal opinion in a court document) so that the Psychologist can ensure an accurate representation of his/her views.
- Send copies of any case consultation notes or case review meeting minutes regarding psychological opinions to the Psychologist who provided the opinion.
- Invite Psychologists to leadership, management, team and other relevant meetings in Offices or Units.
- Request that Psychologists conduct training for staff or volunteers in your location
- Invite Psychologists to discussions about practice issues.
- Consult with PSWs and PACs as well as Psychologists as appropriate.
- Engage in appropriate, mutually cooperative processes to deal with any issues of conflict of opinion.

Related Documents

http://in.dfc.sa.gov.au/cyfs/DesktopModules/SAHT_DNN2_Documents/Download/634076314765131100/psychological-referral-assessment-guidelines-jul08.doc

http://in.dfc.sa.gov.au/cyfs/DesktopModules/SAHT_DNN2_Documents/Download/634076315684818600/info-guide-for-referrals-fsa-psychservices-cps-clinicians.doc