

ACCREDITATION AND CREDENTIALING PROJECT MATERIAL FOR NZCMHN WEBSITE

The project

The NZCMHN is undertaking a project to develop an accreditation and credentialing framework for mental health nurses. Such frameworks are becoming increasingly common throughout the world, and are proving to be valuable tools in ensuring that the role and expertise of specialist mental health nurses are recognised. New Zealand is in a good position to learn from the experience of other nursing jurisdictions, in developing a system of accreditation and credentialing that works for us.

This project is being led by the New Zealand College of Mental Health Nurses. Heather Casey and Frances Hughes are the contact people for this project.

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Key messages

- The project, and its outcomes will be owned by the NZCMHN
- The project is intended to build on previous work (e.g. the Ministry of Health's draft credentialing framework for health professionals) and to emphasise a focus on quality and safety.
- The NZCMHN welcomes input into the accreditation and credentialing framework from members and mental health service providers and those that deliver education programmes and from other health professionals.
- The project will be guided by the accreditation and credentialing reference group.
- Accreditation is about standards for organisations and credentialing is about standards relating to individuals.
- Accreditation and credentialing will be based on the existing standards of the NZCMHN.
- A registered nurse can seek to be:
 - Certified – formally recognised as a mental health nurse through meeting the standards of the NZCMHN;

- Credentialed – formally recognised by the NZCMHN as having the training and expertise to undertake certain discrete skills/ activities (e.g. assessing for competence under the PPPR act).

FAQ - Frequently asked questions

Q What is accreditation?

A Accreditation is the process for formally recognising mental health services and education providers that meet the standards of the NZCMHN for mental health nursing.

Accredited providers will:

- recognise the standards in their practice settings,
- support mental health nurses to achieve the standards, and;
- in the case of education providers, show how they achieve the standards in their programmes and in the practice settings they use.

Accreditation is not about individuals; rather, it is a ‘whole of service’ approach.

Q What is credentialing?

A Credentialing is a process used to assign specific clinical responsibilities to health practitioners on the basis of their education. It commences on appointment and continues for the period of employment.

Both accreditation and credentialing are responsibilities delegated to professional bodies.

Q What is certification?

A Certification is the formal recognition of a registered nurse as a mental health nurse, by the NZCMHN.

Q What is the difference between credentialing and certification?

A Credentialing is about the recognition of training and expertise to perform particular skilled tasks (e.g. assessing competence). You do not need to be a certified mental health nurse in order to receive a credential relating to a particular skill/set of skills.

Certification is the formal recognition that an individual meets the standards of mental health nursing, established by the NZCMHN. However, members of the NZCMHN are expected to be certified.

Q Is credentialing just another qualification?

A No. Qualifications are part of the framework that supports credentialing. Credentialing involves competencies, attributes and recognises continued learning, both formal and informal.

Q Who can become credentialed?

A Credentialing is open to registered nurses who want to undertake specified mental health nursing activities, in psycho-geriatric or intellectual disability care.

It is also available to certified mental health nurses who wish to become credentialed in a specialist activity.

Note that at this stage, only one activity is likely to be credentialed – the assessment of competence for the PPPR Act.

Q I am a registered nurse working in a mental health service; do I have to become credentialed or certified?

A No; these are voluntary processes. However, as the process becomes more widely used, employers may start to look for certified and/or credentialed mental health nurses.

Q What is the difference between the PDRP and credentialing?

A The credentialing framework is not intended to replace or duplicate the PDRP process.

The credentialing framework will apply to all registered mental health nurses, including those working in NGOs or self-employed.

Both accreditation and credentialing are responsibilities delegated to professional bodies. The PDRP process is the responsibility of employers.

As accreditation and credentialing become established, some employers (particularly smaller employers or those who have not had good uptake of the PDRP) may choose to use the NZCMHN process. This is already happening for other health professionals (e.g. midwives and physicians), whereby the processes used by their professional Colleges become adopted by employers.

The certification process will be designed in such a way that it enables nurses who are part of a PDRP process, to reflect that in their application.

Q What are the benefits of certification for mental health nurses?

A Certification provides a clear indication to your employer that you meet a defined set of professional specialist standards (the NZCMHN standards).

Certification will also enable specialist registered nurses to use a title that reflects their expertise (e.g. mental health nurse, CMHN (NZ)) once they have gone through the certification process.

Registered nurses who are not involved in the PDRP process will also be able to use this as means to demonstrate competency for any Nursing Council of New Zealand audits of their practice, or for other external audits.

It is likely that most mental health nurses will seek certification, but may also seek to be credentialed in new, or emerging skills, or in areas of practice in which there is little support. The NZCMHN will provide guidance on such skills.

Q What are the benefits of credentialing for nurses?

A Certified mental health nurse

Credentialing is a way of formally recognising certain discrete, new, and emerging activities and skills which may be undertaken in settings where the mental health nurse is not well supported. Mental health nurses may choose to be credentialed in new and emerging areas within their current domain (e.g. sexual abuse counselling, new therapies or assessment tools).

Other Registered Nurses

There are other RNs who practice in areas that require some mental health expertise, but where they have not completed the education and training that is expected of the mental health nurse (e.g. psycho-geriatric care or intellectual disability). In such cases, nurses may need to undertake certain activities requiring specialist training and demonstrated competency (e.g. assessing competence under the PPPR Act). Credentialing enables these nurses to have their expertise in such activities and skills recognised.

Q What are the benefits of credentialing and certification for employers?

A Employers will know that in addition to certain qualifications, the staff they employ have the knowledge, skills and expertise required to practice in mental health.

These processes also enable employers to more easily distinguish between certified mental health nurses and other (non-certified) nursing staff. This is important in view of the fact that although all nurses graduate with a comprehensive registration (enabling them to practice in mental health) they may not have the necessary knowledge and skills to practice in such settings?

Q How will nurses benefit from accreditation?

A Nurses who attend training or participate in ongoing education will know that this training meets the accreditation standards required for recognition as part of the credentialing process. Currently there is significant variation across programmes in terms of mental health content and time dedicated to mental health.

Q What are the benefits of accreditation for employers?

A Employers will know that the training and other learning opportunities they provide to staff, will meet the standards required for credentialing.

Q What are the benefits of accreditation, certification and credentialing for consumers/service users and their families and whanau?

A The most significant benefits for consumers and their families/whanau are in

terms of transparency. It is important for people using mental health services to know what to expect from a mental health nurse.

Accreditation, certification and credentialing provide more and better information about the training and experience of nurses involved in the care of people with mental illness.

Credentialing also offers clients of disability services and their families, the reassurance that nurses in this area have received particular training and recognition for activities relating to mental health.

Q How do I become credentialed or certified?

A The process is still being developed. We are aiming for the process to be able to be undertaken online and to be user-friendly. For examples of how it operates in other countries, look at the following websites:

- American Nurses' Credentialing Center www.nursecredentialing.org
- Australian Council of Mental Health Nurses www.acmhn.gov.au

Q Is this a 'one off' process?

A No. Once you have been credentialed, you will need to be re-credentialed at regular intervals, probably every three years.

Q How can I find out more information?

A Regular updates on the project will be posted on this website. You can also find out more information through your branch chair.

Q When will this project be complete?

A The accreditation and credentialing framework will be completed by the end of August 2010. It is intended to commence in early 2011.

Q How will these processes work?

A The NZCMHN is currently developing a framework for accreditation and credentialing. Our focus is on making the processes as user-friendly as possible.

Q **What will it cost to become credentialed or certified?**

A The costs to individuals of credentialing and/or certification are currently being scoped.

Q **How can I find out more information?**

A To find out more information keep an eye on this website or contact your branch chairperson.

You also have the opportunity to comment on the discussion framework document on this website (send your comments to peloruswt@xtra.co.nz).