

From pillar to foundation, evolution of wellbeing within Allied Health

Mental Health early career programs

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INTRODUCTION/BACKGROUND

Wellbeing is acknowledged to be a core part of ensuring psychological safety in the workplace and leads to retention of staff.

The Royal Commission into Victoria’s Mental Health System (RCVHMS) recommendations and the National & State Mental Health workforce goals, deepen our efforts to prioritise the wellbeing of our early career allied health workforce.

The introduction of the Allied Health Mental Health Learner Programs “the program” following the RCVHMS, provided a framework for this.

METHODS

Across the implementation, evaluation and evolution of the program within one metropolitan mental health service, feedback from clinicians (learners), educators and clinical teams highlighted the need for increased focus on individual self-care and wellbeing skills, to support the learner’s integration into the workplace, technical skill acquisition and overall competency. Wellbeing was blueprinted across the program and purposively implemented.

EMBEDDING WELLBEING IN THE CURRICULUM

Embedding and prioritising effective self-care (wellbeing) practices ensure clinicians new to mental health learn to develop and nurture the most important tool they have as a mental health clinician, themselves (Posluns & Gall, 2020).



Figure 1: Wellbeing- A pillar of the Learner Program

Blueprinting Wellbeing

All Training: Psychological Safety

Targeted Learning Outcome
Create a psychologically safe learning environment

- ✦ Strategies & Activities
- ✓ Pre-learning sets expectations
- ✓ Approachable educators create trust
- ✓ Sensory tools provided
- ✓ Safe learning space discussed early
- ✓ Team teaching (more than one educator)

Feedback

Setting expectations and creating containment has been beneficial for both learners and educators.

Self-Care: Personalised Planning

Targeted Learning Outcome
Learners establish a personalised self-care plan

- ✦ Strategies & Activities
- ✓ Formal self-care planning introduced
- ✓ Booster session in Year 2
- ✓ Explored in training sessions, group supervision, and individual supervision

Orientation: Building Professional Identity & Belonging

Targeted Learning Outcome
Practice effectively as an allied health clinician in the mental health and wellbeing system.

- ✦ Strategies & Activities
- ✓ Pre-orientation welcome and welcome pack builds sense of belonging
- ✓ End of session 'pub quiz model' for ongoing engagement
- ✓ Activities aim to create long-standing work relationships across allied health disciplines
- ✓ Team teaching (more than one educator)

Feedback

Positive feedback from learners and educators – deeper sense of belonging and connection to the mental health program and cohort.

- *“Ongoing ice breaker activities during orientation, not just the first day. This encouraged us to keep connecting with other learners.”*

Figure 2: Three examples of blueprinting wellbeing in the curriculum

	Strategies/activities	Feedback
Workplace learning	Supportive teams, dedicated discipline educator, rotations, learner led supervision handover, buddy system, site visits, discovery days	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reviewed at the end of each program via a focus group (independent facilitator) and feedback aspects targeted. • Team feedback (leadership), supervisor reflective space feedback • Clear communication and developing positive relationships with teams integral for wellbeing of learners.
Dedicated educator support	Site visits, educator on-site, training, supervision, learning plan, co-located educator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Graduates experience educators as readily available and responsive, and easily accessible • Graduates reported benefit of having an educator external to the team to provide an objective opinion, practical advice, and clinical or systems support as required

Figure 3: Experiential learning examples

RESULTS

Overarching learner program outcomes:

- Retention rates above 75% across the novice allied health workforce, who engage in the program.
- Meeting recommendations 16 and 59 from the RCVHMS: “Establishing mentally healthy workplaces”, and “Workforce Safety & Wellbeing”



Figure 4: Quotes from learners related to wellbeing

FUTURE DIRECTIONS

AHMH L&T continues to have a deep focus of clinician wellbeing, and it is the **foundation** that **underpins all aspects** of learner development, education delivery and evaluation.

Public mental health services in Victoria (in meeting RCVHMS) can now share their experience and support physical health and tertiary education peers to develop novice workforce wellbeing and support career longevity.

Research will formally continue with author Jaime Jenkinson commencing Doctoral candidature (La Trobe University) - Thesis Topic: Psychological Safety and Wellbeing in Early Career Allied Health Mental Health Programs.

REFERENCES

State of Victoria, Royal Commission into Victoria’s Mental Health System, Final Report, Summary and recommendations, Parl Paper No. 202, Session 2018–21

RCVMHS [Fact Sheet Workforce](#)

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