

Social work assistant

Service model

Social work services at Mater Health Services were redesigned to incorporate a social work assistant (SWA) role. Under the Social Work Task Complexity and Delegation model, the SWA is responsible for the low-level and often time consuming tasks that prevent social workers from undertaking more complex and therapeutic interventions, such as assessment and counselling. The establishment of the role allows more efficient alignment of skills to task and enables social workers to operate to their full scope of practice.

Features of the SWA service model include:

- The SWA operates under a delegation model, receiving referrals from social workers. The SWA does not case manage, assess or provide interventions to patients.
- Regular clinical supervision is provided by a social worker.
- The SWA role has been endorsed by Queensland Health at operational officer level 3 (OO3).

Key elements of role

The SWA works under a delegation model where social workers assess each patient and then delegate appropriate tasks to the assistant. Such tasks may include:

- Centrelink paperwork
- organisation of housing
- practical assistance
- financial assistance
- community referral
- organisation of car parking
- collecting social work referrals
- patient escort
- residential care paperwork / liaison.

Outcomes

Under a social work assistant model there was:

- 20% increase in number of new patients seen
- 11% reduction in cost per occasion of service
- 47% reduction in accrual of time-in-lieu
- 81% increase in social worker time spent on complex tasks
- improved social worker job satisfaction.

Other outcomes included:

- Development of Social Work Task Complexity Hierarchy
- Identification of need for creation of a new social work assistant qualification nationally as some SWA-specific competencies are not covered by the generic allied health assistant qualification.

Resources to support implementation of model

[Approved duties, knowledge, skills and abilities for OO3 social work assistant role in Operational Services Manual](#)

[Example role description](#)

[Social work task complexity hierarchy](#)

[Training needs analysis for social work assistant role](#)

Evaluation measures

Service processes

Number of new patients seen

Accrual of staff time-in-lieu

Cost per occasion of service

Service activity by task complexity

Contact details

Allied Health Professions' Office of Queensland

Allied_Health_Advisory@health.qld.gov.au

07 3328 9298