

WORKSHOP SUMMARY

For-purpose/non-government and Primary Health Network mental health settings

This document provides a summary of the discussion and findings from the deep dive workshop focused on for-purpose/non-government organisation (NGO) and Primary Health Network (PHN) mental health settings. The workshop was held on the 15th of December 2021. The workshop was undertaken on behalf of Occupational Therapy Australia (OTA).

Key findings

Current approach to identifying training and development needs

- Workshop participants worked in a range of non-government mental health settings including several settings where they were the only mental health occupational therapists.
- Approaches to training and early career supports varied based on the service with support and supervision provided by a combination of other mental health professions within the service such as psychologists and social workers and external OT supervision with both mental health and non-mental health OTs.
- Training needs were identified in a range of ways, primarily through supervision discussions and as part of annual performance reviews.
- Use of formal training structures has been limited and there was interest in both what OTA might provide and in current work being undertaken at Headspace to support the new graduate program.
- Training consisted primarily of multidisciplinary training with other mental health professions with OT-specific training generally accessed externally.
- Participants noted that while mental health service demand has increased significantly, there is also a need for those in regional and remote areas to have capacity to provide non-mental health services such as assistive technology prescriptions.

Career pathways and stages

- Participants noted that the range of different settings in which OTs have worked can mean that different skills are developed and to different levels.
- Early career participants indicated that they would value more structure around capabilities at different levels of career development both to understand and guide development and to support discussions with supervisors about appropriate expectations about capabilities and scope of practice.
- Participants noted that senior clinicians were most likely to move into non-clinical management-based senior roles as they progressed. This makes it difficult to identify specific senior career clinical capabilities or areas of advanced practice. However, it was noted that there would be value in advanced practice areas focused on areas of high complexity/need such

as eating disorders, autism spectrum disorder (ASD), positive behaviour supports, and Behavioural and Psychological Symptoms in Dementia (BPSD).

Skills and capabilities for non-government and PHN-funded mental health settings

- A range of areas of capability were identified by practitioners. These included:
 - o OT-specific assessment tools
 - o Psychological therapies with an OT lens (noting that OTs receiving training from other professions may need to 'translate' the approaches to an OT way of working)
 - o Narrative therapy (*Narrative Therapy was considered a good approach when working in a culturally safe manner).
 - o Dyadic Developmental Psychotherapy
 - o Trauma-informed care (familiarity with impact of trauma and understanding of how to use interventions to address trauma)
 - o Culturally safe practice
- While awareness of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) and the specific assessments and needs of the scheme were considered important as part of mental health OT development, participants noted that they had limited interaction with the NDIS and would generally refer clients on to other practitioners within the service or externally for NDIS-related assessments and supports.
- The ability to work in a range of environments as part of outreach work was considered an important OT capability.
- Client advocacy was also flagged as an important role for mental health OTs, noting the importance of being able to participate in, and argue on behalf of the client, at care team meetings or reviews with educators and school-based professionals.
- Workshop participants highlighted the importance of training that focused on providing supports for clients with an OT lens and retaining an OT identity in multi-discipline/generic roles and working environments.

OTA support for clinicians in non-government mental health-based settings

- Workshop participants flagged the value of a service to support mental health OTs to connect with appropriate supervisors, noting that the current Find an OT service was difficult to use due to limited ability to filter and sort based on the required skillsets.
- Communities of practice were considered highly valuable and of significant interest.
- Employers in organisations like Headspace and other PHN-funded services were likely to be supportive of engagement by OTA to discuss training needs and receptive to input about what areas of development were likely to be important.

Additional post-session questions

1. **Are there any other areas of mental health capability that should be included in a capability framework for OTs working in NGO and PHN settings?**
2. **What are the key areas of mid- and senior career capability required when compared with earlier career capability?**
3. **Are there any other services or supports OTA could be offering to mental health OTs?**

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