

MEDIA STATEMENT



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INCREASED FUNDING FOR COMMUNITY MENTAL HEALTH MAY NOT BE GOING TO THE MOST EFFECTIVE SERVICES: AUDITOR GENERAL

Auditor General Colin Murphy reported today that WA Health is not ensuring that services provided by Community Mental Health Teams meet consumer and community needs.

"It is not clear that the increased investment in community mental health is being targeted to the most effective services," Mr Murphy said.

In examining Adult Community Mental Health Teams, Mr Murphy's office looked at whether services were available and accessible to consumers, and if they were effectively delivered.

The report found that having Community Mental Health Teams in 39 locations across the state makes some services available in most communities, but the mix of services has developed ad hoc and does not consistently match needs.

"Gaps in services and inconsistent access to services for mental health care consumers mean that they can find it difficult to get the care they need when they need it," said Mr Murphy.

The Auditor General's report, 'Adult Community Mental Health Teams: Availability, Accessibility and Effectiveness of Services', tabled in Parliament today, found that the care consumers receive can depend more on where they live than their assessed needs.

The time it can take for consumers to get help can leave them at risk of their condition deteriorating, and in many cases consumers have to be in crisis to access services.

"Earlier intervention may help prevent deterioration and reduce the need for more intensive acute treatment," said Mr Murphy.

The report found that WA Health has improved its performance in contacting consumers after discharge from hospital when they are at higher risk of suicide, but it falls short of the national best practice benchmark which recommends contacting 90 per cent of consumers within seven days.

The examination identified a need to improve the levels of consumer and carer involvement and the consistency of care planning.

"Consumer involvement and ownership of their care is important to its success, but consumers and carers are not adequately involved in planning and reviewing care," said Mr Murphy.

"Good care planning is an essential part of effective care delivery, but over 20 per cent of consumers in our sample did not have a care plan."

Consumers often require additional services to those provided by Community Mental Health Teams, but a lack of information-sharing and coordination between providers makes it harder for consumers to get all the services they need.

"Community mental health services should be based on a good analysis of needs, and good information on what works, to make sure money is spent on those services that make a difference to consumers," Mr Murphy said.

The report can be downloaded from www.audit.wa.gov.au

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