



Working Effectively in Multi-disciplinary Teams as a Counsellor

Counsellor Toolkit 2024

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Working Effectively in Multi-disciplinary Teams as a Counsellor

As a counsellor in Australia, you often work in multi-disciplinary teams across various settings to provide comprehensive support to individuals dealing with mental health issues, addiction, relationship problems, and other challenges. These teams consist of professionals from diverse backgrounds, such as psychologists, social workers, nurses, and educators, collaborating to address the complex needs of clients.

[More Information](#)

Here are some examples of where you might find counsellors working as part of multi-disciplinary teams:

Community Health Centres: Counsellors in Australia often work in community health centres alongside general practitioners, psychologists, social workers, and other healthcare professionals. In these settings, multi-disciplinary teams collaborate to provide holistic care to individuals and families, addressing both physical and mental health needs.

Mental Health Clinics: Multi-disciplinary teams in mental health clinics may include psychiatrists, psychiatric nurses, occupational therapists, and counsellors. These teams work together to assess, diagnose, and treat mental health disorders, offering a range of therapeutic interventions and support services.

Schools and Educational Institutions: Counsellors employed in schools and educational institutions often collaborate with teachers, school psychologists, speech therapists, and special education specialists. Together, they form multi-disciplinary teams to support students' academic, social, and emotional well-being, providing counselling services, behaviour management strategies, and educational accommodations.

Drug and Alcohol Rehabilitation Centres: Counsellors working in drug and alcohol rehabilitation centres may be part of multi-disciplinary teams that include addiction specialists, medical professionals, and peer support workers. These teams work together to provide comprehensive treatment programs,

including counselling, detoxification, and relapse prevention strategies.

Family and Domestic Violence Services: In organisations providing support to individuals and families affected by domestic violence, counsellors often collaborate with legal advocates, case managers, and child protection workers. Multi-disciplinary teams in these settings work to ensure the safety and well-being of survivors, offering counselling, crisis intervention, and access to support services.

An example of an evidenced based framework can be found on The Indigo 4Ms Framework, which has been designed to provide integrated care for older people in rural settings.

[Framework](#)

Why Multi-disciplinary Teams?

According to NSW Health (n.d.), multi-disciplinary team allows for integrated care, addressing physical, emotional, and social well-being. Working in multi-disciplinary teams offers several benefits:

Comprehensive Care: Multi-disciplinary teams allow for a holistic approach to client care, addressing physical, emotional, and social well-being.

Diverse Perspectives: Collaborating with professionals from different disciplines provides diverse perspectives and expertise, enriching the quality of care.

Resource Sharing: Teams can pool resources and knowledge, maximising efficiency, and effectiveness in addressing client needs.

Learning Opportunities: Working alongside colleagues from various backgrounds offers valuable learning and professional development opportunities.

Getting Along and Working Together: When a multi-disciplinary team is doing well, you'll notice that team members from different areas all get along. They work together smoothly, sharing info, ideas, and resources to help clients. Everyone respects each other's skills and pitches in to make things work.

All on the Same Page: The team shares the same goals and vision for helping clients. They know what they're aiming for and are committed to making it happen.

Keeping in the Loop: Communication is clear and honest in a good team. People listen to each other, share what they know, and give helpful feedback. They've got good ways to talk to each other so that nothing gets missed.

Knowing Who's Who: Everyone in the team knows what their job is and what they're supposed to be doing. That way, there's no mix-ups or confusion about who's meant to do what.

Respecting Everyone's Differences: The team sees the value in having different people with different skills and backgrounds. They respect each other's ideas and ways of doing things, even if they're not the same.

Making Good Decisions: Decisions in the team are fair and sensible. They talk things through, look at the facts, and make choices together that make sense for everyone.

Putting Clients First: Helping clients is what it's all about. The team looks at each client as a whole person and tries to give them the help they need, whether it's medical, emotional, or social.

When joining a team as a counsellor, it's important to clarify your role, understand team dynamics, and familiarise yourself with organisational culture and communication channels. Additionally, be mindful of ethical considerations and seek support to navigate challenges so you can contribute effectively to client care.

Developing a Comprehensive Team Care Plan in Multidisciplinary Settings

A team care plan in a multidisciplinary setting involves collaboratively developing and implementing a comprehensive strategy to address the various aspects of a client's well-being. This plan typically integrates input from professionals across different disciplines to ensure a holistic approach to client care. It outlines specific goals, interventions, responsibilities, and timelines tailored to the individual client's needs, encompassing physical, emotional, and social dimensions. Regular review and revision of the care plan allows for ongoing assessment of progress and adjustment of strategies as needed to optimize

client outcomes. Overall, when a multi-disciplinary team is working well, it's a group effort.

Compliance with Privacy Regulations in Australia

The [Privacy Act 1988](#) (Cth) in Australia along with the [Australian Privacy Principles](#) (APPs) contained within it, outlines principles for handling personal information, including client notes in healthcare. Under these regulations:

Collection: Healthcare providers should only collect client notes necessary for providing healthcare services or related purposes. Clients should be informed about the purpose of data collection, and consent should be obtained whenever possible.

Use and Disclosure: Healthcare providers may use client notes for the primary purpose they were collected, such as providing healthcare services or treatment. Disclosure to third parties requires client consent. Unauthorised access to client notes by individuals constitutes a breach of the privacy regulations and organisational protocols. Consequences may include disciplinary action, legal repercussions and or termination of employment.

Organisations will maintain a single client record to ensure consistency, accuracy, and operational efficiency. This practice helps in better managing client relationships, enhancing operational processes, and ensuring data security and integrity.

For more information on client notes, please refer to our guideline.

Note Taking

Care Coordination in a Multidisciplinary Team

In a multidisciplinary team, a counsellor collaborates with the primary individual responsible for coordinating overall care. In government-funded or private organisations, a designated care coordinator may serve as a central contact point, ensuring seamless collaboration and integrated care delivery.

Alternatively, care coordination may also be undertaken by a team leader or senior clinician nominated for this role. Clients within the organisation

are informed of their inclusion in a care team, facilitating information sharing among team members. For more detailed information on how care teams are required to work with individuals with complex needs in Victoria, visit here:

[More Information](#)

From a counsellor's perspective, the role of the care coordinator complements their work by streamlining communication, facilitating coordination of care plans, and ensuring that clients receive integrated support across different service providers. This collaborative framework promotes efficiency and minimises gaps in service delivery, ultimately benefiting clients' overall treatment outcomes.

[More Information](#)

Considerations for Participating in Care Teams as a Private Provider

When you are employed by an organisation to participate in a care team, you typically receive financial compensation as part of your core salary, and your involvement is often considered a component of your job responsibilities. This arrangement grants you access to organisational resources, support, and supervision.

It's essential to obtain client consent before participating as a private provider in a care team, ensuring that clients are aware of and agree to the involvement of additional providers in their care and decision-making processes. Without client consent, participation as a private provider in a care team would not be feasible. Once consent is obtained, private providers can contribute their expertise to the team, enhancing client outcomes and fostering collaboration among multidisciplinary team members.

Participating as a private provider in a care team offers exciting opportunities for collaboration, professional growth, and making a meaningful impact on client care. While there are potential risks to consider, such as volunteering your time if not paid and navigating professional boundaries, these can be effectively managed with careful planning and communication. By joining a care team, private providers have the chance to expand their network,

learn from colleagues in different disciplines, and contribute their unique expertise to enhance client outcomes. With clear expectations and a focus on the benefits of collaboration, participating in care teams can be a rewarding experience that fosters personal and professional development.

Managing Risks & Concerns as a Counsellor in a Care Team

As a counsellor working on a care team, managing risks and concerns involves several key steps:

Risk Assessment: Identify potential risks and concerns related to client care, such as safety issues, mental health crises, or non-compliance with treatment plans.

Communication: Communicate any identified risks or concerns to the designated care coordinator or team leader promptly. Effective communication ensures that appropriate action can be taken in a timely manner.

Collaboration: Work collaboratively with other team members to develop strategies for managing identified risks and concerns. This may involve consulting with other healthcare professionals, social workers, or support staff to ensure a comprehensive approach to risk management.

Documentation: Document all discussions, assessments, and interventions related to managing risks and concerns in the client's records according to organisational policies and legal requirements. Accurate documentation helps maintain continuity of care and ensures accountability.

Client Engagement: Engage clients in discussions about identified risks and concerns and involve them in developing risk management plans where appropriate. Client involvement promotes autonomy and enhances the effectiveness of risk management strategies.

Follow-up: Monitor and review the effectiveness of risk management strategies regularly, adjusting plans as needed based on changing circumstances or client needs. Regular follow-up ensures that risks and concerns are managed effectively over time.

By actively identifying, communicating, and collaborating on the management of risks and concerns, counsellors contribute to the overall safety and well-being of clients within the care team.

Facing Challenges

When a multi-disciplinary team is facing challenges and not functioning optimally, it's important to address these issues promptly and effectively. Here are some guidelines and strategies to overcome common challenges and improve team performance:

Communication Barriers:

- If communication is lacking, encourage team members to speak up and share their thoughts openly.
- Use clear and concise language, avoiding technical jargon that may be confusing to others.
- Schedule regular team meetings to ensure everyone stays informed and can contribute.

Differing Treatment Approaches:

- Acknowledge and respect the expertise of each team member, even if their approaches differ.
- Work together to develop treatment plans that incorporate diverse perspectives and evidence-based practices.
- Rely on research and best practices to guide decision-making and ensure the most effective interventions are utilised.

Role Ambiguity:

- Take time to clarify roles and responsibilities within the team, ensuring that everyone understands their role and how it contributes to the team's objectives.
- Regularly revisit and update role expectations to adapt to changing circumstances and ensure alignment with team goals.
- Foster a culture of mutual support and collaboration, where team members are encouraged to step in and help each other as needed.

Power Dynamics:

- Encourage open dialogue and equal participation among all team members, regardless of seniority or professional status.
- Establish transparent processes for decision-making, ensuring that input from all team members is considered and valued.
- Foster an inclusive team culture where everyone feels empowered to contribute and their perspectives are respected.

Confidentiality Concerns:

- Reiterate the importance of adhering to ethical guidelines and legal regulations regarding client confidentiality.
- Use secure communication channels and protocols for sharing sensitive information within the team.
- Obtain explicit consent from clients before sharing any relevant information with other team members.

Internal Supervision in Multi-disciplinary Teams

- Prioritise internal supervision sessions to address any underlying issues or concerns within the team.
- Use supervision as an opportunity to foster collaboration, enhance holistic care planning, promote interdisciplinary learning, and provide support to team members.
- Encourage open and honest communication during supervision sessions, allowing team members to express their thoughts and concerns freely.
- By proactively addressing these challenges and implementing these strategies, multi-disciplinary teams can work towards improving communication, collaboration, and overall team effectiveness, ultimately enhancing the quality of care provided to clients.

The Value of Ongoing External Supervision

In addition to internal supervision within the multi-disciplinary team, external supervision provided by a qualified supervisor who is not directly involved in the team can offer unique benefits for counsellors.

Incorporating ongoing external supervision into the professional development plan of counsellors working in multi-disciplinary teams enhances their effectiveness, resilience, and satisfaction in their roles. By embracing external supervision in conjunction with internal team support, counsellors can cultivate a well-rounded approach to professional growth and client care.

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"Disclaimer: While the information provided in this fact sheet is current as of the date written, it is essential for counsellors to stay updated with the latest regulations, resources, and practices specific to their state within Australia. It is the responsibility of the counsellor to ensure compliance and effectiveness in their work. Seeking guidance from a supervisor is advised to navigate regional requirements. This disclaimer underscores the counsellor's responsibility to stay informed and adhere to relevant standards and guidelines."



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