

DIVISIONS OF GENERAL PRACTICE

Closing the Gap - Improving Indigenous Access to Mainstream Primary Care Program

Guidance on Needs Assessment Content

This document sets out the Department of Health and Ageing's expectations on the issues Division's needs assessments should, at a minimum, address. Divisions will be required to upload a copy of their needs assessment report onto the Divisions On-line Reporting System as part of the 2009-10 Interim Plan submission process.

In undertaking the needs assessment process, Divisions will have the flexibility to target particular practices or specific communities in the region.

The needs assessment report to the Department should be a descriptive summary of the issues set out below. The Department acknowledges that for the 2009-10 Interim Plan, the Needs Assessment may to some extent be limited by the Division's ability to establish working relationships with stakeholders in the time available. Where this is the case, the Division should outline areas affected. The Needs Assessment for subsequent years will be expected to address any gaps.

The process for undertaking the needs assessment and its presentation are at the discretion of the Division. However, Divisions will be required to structure the needs assessment under the bold headings provided below.

Information sources Division's might use include: the Division's existing records, Australian Bureau of Statistics, Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, public health websites, research undertaken by Universities, local government etc, stakeholder consultations, surveys etc.

Local Indigenous population characteristics

- Demographics – including age, income, employment status, population clusters
- Population health profile – including incidence and distribution of key health conditions
- Health priorities for the population – identified at a local, state and/or national level

Existing mainstream and Indigenous health services

- Types of relevant existing services and programs (eg Aboriginal Medical Services, general practice including bulk billing practices, after hours services, allied health, specialists, community health, dental, local/state/national government programs, non-government organisation programs, private institutions eg private hospitals)
- Existing tools, resources, information materials, training etc that could be used under the program

Stakeholder views and expectations

- Indigenous community members
- Key Indigenous stakeholder groups – including local Indigenous health services, consumer and health provider groups and any regional CTG committees.
- Key mainstream service providers/groups (e.g. community health services, hospital Aboriginal Liaison Officers).
- Views of these groups – eg on health needs, existing services, barriers to access, potential program implementation models, priorities
- Opportunities for collaboration - eg with stakeholders, other programs, other Divisions, local and state governments

Analysis

- Prioritisation of health and access needs of the local Indigenous population or of actions to achieve prioritisation.
- Strengths and weaknesses of current service provision, including gaps in services and barriers to access or processes needed to identify these. Access barriers might include:
 - distance
 - transport
 - cultural issues

- cost
- competing commitments, eg work, personal, family
- patients not identifying their Indigenous status and therefore being able to access Indigenous specific programs/initiatives (eg Indigenous health checks)
- Indigenous community awareness, perceptions and expectations of services, and health literacy
- waiting lists
- opening hours
- poor communication or collaboration between providers
- characteristics of health providers (eg availability of female, male or Indigenous providers, cultural sensitivity, language barriers, openness to serving Indigenous clients, community control)

Identification of options for program implementation

Existing models that could be adapted locally

- Identification and assessment of existing models – eg those implemented in Indigenous or mainstream communities, locally/elsewhere in Australia or overseas

Prioritisation of options in consultation with local Indigenous stakeholders

Risk assessment and management plan for program implementation