

Asking young people in mental health services how they're going

Information for young people about measuring outcomes



The Department of Human Services is responsible for planning and funding public mental health services across Victoria. We want to continually improve the results (or 'outcomes') for people who use these services.

In order to find out what these outcomes are, we now ask you to describe your mental health when you start using a service and also when you leave. By comparing the answers we can learn about what has changed for you. We call this 'outcome measurement'.

Measuring outcomes can give you and your family or carer an extra opportunity to participate in planning treatment and care. Understanding what works in mental health also helps your case manager and us in planning and providing quality services.

What are outcome measures? So how does this SDQ work?

Outcome measures are questionnaires that are used to assess your mental health and wellbeing. These questionnaires are completed when you start using the mental health service and when treatment ends.

Who fills out these questionnaires?

Your case manager is expected to complete these questionnaires. You can also become involved. Your parents or guardian and your teacher can also be invited to offer their views.

Why measure outcomes?

By comparing your answers to these questionnaires over time, you and your case manager will be able to see how you are going. You may be doing better in some areas and worse in others. Your answers will also show where you may need extra help.

How can I take part?

You can participate in outcome measurement by answering the questions in the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (the SDQ).

You will probably be offered the SDQ:

- when you start using a mental health service
- from time to time during your involvement with the service
- when you stop using the service.

You can also ask for a copy of the SDQ to complete at any other time.

The SDQ covers some pretty important issues, such as how you have felt about yourself or related to others. It consists of around 30 statements such as 'I am nervous in new situations' and 'I usually share with others'. For most of these statements you are asked whether you think they are 'not true', 'somewhat true' or 'certainly true' for you.

Do I have to fill out the SDQ?

No. Completing this questionnaire is up to you. You can choose whether you want to complete the SDQ each time you are offered the questionnaire.

You do not have to fill out the SDQ, but if you do, your answers will help your case manager understand what treatment you need and if you are getting better.

How do I complete the SDQ?

For each statement, tick the box that best describes how things have been for you. This is not a test: there is no right or wrong answer. Your views may change over time, which is fine.

The first time you complete the SDQ, you'll be asked to comment on your behaviour and how life has looked for you over the last six months. The next time you will be asked about how things have been for you over the past month.



What happens to the completed questionnaire?

When you have completed the SDQ, you can discuss your answers with your case manager. The completed form goes on your confidential medical file. Your answers are also entered into the confidential database of the mental health service. This is done so your ratings can be compared over time.

What about confidentiality?

All the SDQ ratings you make become part of your confidential medical record. They will be protected from unauthorised access, just like any other personal information that you disclose during treatment.

How will I benefit from outcome measurement?

By telling your case manager 'your side of the story' you can make sure that he or she has a good sense of what's happening in your life right now. The questionnaire can help you discuss your mental health with your case manager and focus on areas that matter to you.

Your answers to the SDQ will also help to make sure that issues that matter to you can be identified upfront. These can then be taken into account in planning or reviewing your treatment and care.

What if I have other issues?

You can discuss this pamphlet or any broader issues with:

- your doctor
- your case manager
- your parents or carer
- people employed by the mental health service called 'consumer consultants'
- other staff in the mental health service with whom you get along.

Some useful contacts

Your case manager/doctor: _____

Telephone: _____

Other: _____

Telephone: _____

For further information about outcome measurement

Visit the website of the Department of Human Services at www.health.vic.gov.au/mentalhealth/outcomes/index.htm or contact your local Department of Human Services office.

This brochure is also available in a range of community languages. Ask the mental health service for details or visit the above website.

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