

# Asking older persons using mental health services how they're going

Information for older consumers 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 the outcomes are, we ask you to describe your mental health when you start using a service and also when you leave it. By comparing the answers, we can learn about what has changed for you. We call this 'outcome measurement'.

Measuring outcomes gives you and your family or your carer an additional opportunity to take part in planning treatment and care. Understanding what works in mental health also helps your doctor and us in planning and providing quality services.

## What are outcome measures?

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. If you remain involved with the mental health service for a longer period, the questionnaires are filled out again each time your individual service plan is reviewed. The individual service plan is the document that guides your treatment and care.

## Why measure outcomes?

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



## Who fills out these questionnaires?

Your doctor or case manager is expected to complete these questionnaires but you can also become involved.

## How can I take part?

You can take part in outcome measurement by answering questions about your own mental health. This is done by filling out a questionnaire called the *Behaviour and Symptom Identification Scale*, or BASIS-32 for short.

You will probably be asked to complete the BASIS-32:

- when you start using the mental health service;
- every three months after that;
- when you leave the service.

You can also request a copy of the questionnaire to complete at any other time.

## What does the BASIS-32 questionnaire ask?

The BASIS-32 covers many important issues. For example, one question asks how you have felt about yourself in the past two weeks. Another question asks how you have been getting along with others.

Other questions ask you about problems in many different areas of life. You may or may not have experienced problems in these areas. For each question, you are asked whether you have had any difficulty in that area.

The aim of the questionnaire is to get the best possible picture of your mental health, never to give offence.

## Do I have to fill out this questionnaire?

**No.** Completing this questionnaire is voluntary. Saying 'no' will not affect your treatment. You can choose whether to complete the BASIS-32 each time you are offered the questionnaire.

You do not have to fill out the BASIS-32. If you do complete the form, your answers will help your doctor or case manager understand how you are going and what further treatment you may need.

## How do I fill out the BASIS-32?

Tick the box that best describes the level of difficulty you have had in each area in the past two weeks. This is not a test: there is no right or wrong answer. Your views about your own mental health are important and will be sought on a regular basis.

## What happens to the completed form?

When you have completed the BASIS-32, you can discuss your answers with your doctor or case manager. The completed questionnaire is placed on your confidential medical file. Your answers are also entered into the confidential database of the mental health service, so they can be compared over time.

## What about confidentiality?

All the BASIS-32 questionnaires you fill out become part of your confidential medical record. They will be protected from unauthorised access, just like any other personal information that you disclose during your treatment.

## How will I benefit from outcome measurement?

By telling the clinician ‘your side of the story’, you can make sure that he or she understands how things are for you right now. The questionnaire can help you discuss mental health issues with your clinician and focus on areas of concern to you.

Your answers to the BASIS-32 help make sure that your views and your needs are understood. 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 you may have with:

- your carer;
- your doctor or case manager;
- the consumer consultant or other staff at your mental health service.

## Some useful contacts

**Your case manager/doctor:** \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_

**Consumer consultant:** \_\_\_\_\_

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](http://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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