

Overview of the selected intervention in Victoria

Health service brokerage: Linking vulnerable social service clients to primary medical care

Rationale: Many individuals who are receiving social services because of social vulnerabilities often do not get appropriate primary medical care because of a lack of health literacy (including knowledge of health services), or a perceived lack of cultural awareness and stigma from services. Social services are typically disconnected from primary care, and primary care providers have limited knowledge of the social/community sector. For these reasons, it was suggested to reach these vulnerable clients through their established access to social/community services, and implement a health service brokerage service to link them to appropriate primary care services that are acceptable and appropriate for their needs and that enhance their ability to engage with primary medical care.

Targeted population: Patients of social service organization serving vulnerable populations (disabled, low socioeconomic status, high levels of disadvantage (SEIFA score), unemployed or underemployed, mental health or substance abuse issues), who do not have an enduring or acceptable relationship to primary medical care. The specific population to initiate the intervention will be disabled individuals aged less than 65 years who receive services from the City of Greater Dandenong Home and Community Care program.

Intervention: The brokerage service involves changing processes and procedures in HACC. The steps of the intervention are: introducing a screening procedure for potential clients to identify those without a regular primary care provider who they have visited in the last 12 months. If the need is detected, reasons for lack of connection will be ascertained and staff will match the clients needs/preferences with available GPs in the region. Depending on the need, the client may be connected to a new GP or they may be re-connected to a GP they have seen in the past. In addition to making an appointment for the client, HACC staff will support the visit and follow up to ascertain whether the client is likely to seek care from this PHC provider in future. A second organisation, the South Eastern Health Providers Association, will help with the GP linkage aspect through prior knowledge of available GPs and capacity building within recruited practices. The goal is to ensure that socially vulnerable clients have an enduring and acceptable relationship with a GP so they get appropriate primary medical care, and the client's needs are addressed in primary care and a timely manner.

Links with primary healthcare: SEHPA has agreed to identify and recruit GPs who are willing to accept vulnerable patients and to work alongside HACC to match the client to a suitable provider. SEHPA will also work with primary care practices to optimize the acceptability, approachability and appropriateness of the care they offer to these vulnerable clients.

Local Partners: The South Eastern Health Providers Association, a member-based not for profit organisation for primary care (GPs, nurses, allied health) advocacy, training including continuing professional development, resource design and networking; and the City of Greater Dandenong Council Home & Community Care Program, a Local Government funded program that enables elderly (65+) and disabled community members to remain active and supported in their home and community.