

Mental Health, Ambulance and Police Project (MHAPP)

FACT SHEET

Why MHAPP?

Emergency services are often required to respond to a person experiencing a mental health crisis in the community. This often results in the person being unnecessarily transported to the Emergency Department (ED) causing further distress and trauma to patients and families, and placing unnecessary demands on EDs and emergency services. There is a significant opportunity to provide more timely access to safe and appropriate specialist mental health assessment and referral for these people, avoiding unnecessary presentations to the emergency department.

What is MHAPP?

MHAPP is a trial partnership involving Illawarra Shoalhaven Local Health District (ISLHD) Mental Health Service, NSW Ambulance and Wollongong Police District. MHAPP aims to provide safe and timely access to mental health advice, assessment and appropriate referral or transport for people experiencing a mental health crisis in the community and to avoid unnecessary presentations to the Emergency Department where possible.

How does MHAPP work?

An experienced mental health clinician is available during periods of peak demand to work with ambulance and police to provide telephone and on-site support for people experiencing a mental health crisis, including access to a mental health assessment and advice on de-escalation, transport and referral options. The MHAPP clinician is based at Illawarra Community Mental Health and has access to a health vehicle to travel to the scene.

How are referrals made to the MHAPP clinician?

Police and ambulance can refer to the MHAPP clinician via the police shift supervisor or ambulance control centre. If the MHAPP clinician is unavailable, emergency services will respond to the situation in accordance with usual practice and protocols.

What are the hours of operation?

The MHAPP clinician is available in the Wollongong area between 1200 and 2000 hours seven days a week. Referrals for on-site assessment by the MHAPP clinician can be made up until 1900 hours.

What are the exclusion criteria?

The following people are excluded from onsite assessment:

- Children under 14
- Persons under influence of alcohol or other drugs
- Persons with acute medical concerns requiring urgent hospital transport
- Persons with no previous documented mental health history with ISLHD Mental Health Services

How does an onsite assessment work?

When an ambulance is onsite, paramedics are responsible for conducting a physical assessment. Alternatively, the MHAPP clinician is able to conduct a physical nursing assessment.

The MHAPP clinician is responsible for mental health triage, assessment and evidence based brief interventions to aid de-escalation and manage presenting issues. A follow up care plan will be developed in consultation with the client where possible. The MHAPP clinician will recommend an appropriate pathway in consultation with the consultant psychiatrist on call.

What pathways are available for patients assessed by the MHAPP clinician?

Following assessment, pathways include:

- Referral to the Community Mental Health team and other community services and supports including general practice
- Transport to ED if appropriate with handover facilitated by MHAPP clinician.

What are the benefits of MHAPP for patients?

- Early access to appropriate specialist mental health assessment in the community
- Where appropriate, reduced exposure to the Emergency Department
- Greater opportunity to participate in the development of their individualised care plan
- More timely access to appropriate services and support

For further information

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