

Stepped Care Approach to Primary Mental Health Care

Julia Creek



Stepped Care is a model of mental healthcare where service intensity is matched to an individual's treatment needs and severity of mental health issues. In a stepped care approach, a person is offered interventions and supports at an intensity that best meets their needs and preferences. When these needs and preferences change, the treatments and supports are changed accordingly.

This document aligns with the Australian Government's [Initial Assessment and Referral Decision Support Tool](#) for health professionals to use when assessing and supporting a patient and referring the appropriate services.

For more information visit [Western Queensland Primary Health Network | Initial Assessment and Referral \(IAR\) Tool](#)

1 Self-Management

May not meet diagnostic criteria, but increased risk e.g. family history, signs and symptoms.

Psychoeducation, online resources, focus on preventing onset or escalation.

2 Low Intensity Services

Symptoms do not interfere with daily functioning or cause significant distress.

Social supports, lifestyle changes, brief counselling or psychotherapy.

3 Moderate Intensity Services

Symptoms impact daily activities, relationships, and overall quality of life.

Structured, frequent, specialised psychological interventions.

4 High Intensity Services

Symptoms are severe (persistent or episodic) likely experiencing moderate or higher problems associated with risk, functioning and co-existing conditions.

Specialised mental health services, multidisciplinary support.

5 Acute & Specialist Community Mental Health Services

Severe and persistent mental illness and complex multiagency needs.

Out of scope for PHN funding. Specialised tertiary mental health services e.g. state hospital and health services.

Julia Creek

If you are unsure where to start, contact Medicare Mental Health on 1800 595 212 or via medicarementalhealth.gov.au

All services listed below are free and welcome all referrals. A GP mental health treatment plan may be required.

Service

	1 Self- Management	2 Low Intensity	3 Moderate Intensity	4 High Intensity	5 Acute Care
1300 MH Call 1300 642 255 Confidential telephone triage service available 24/7 and connects caller to nearest public mental health service.	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓
Medicare Mental Health 1800 595 212 medicarementalhealth.gov.au Free, confidential Assessment and Referral Phone Service offering an accessible entry point to all mental health services.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗
Caitlin Gibson 07 31 29 0196 Targeted, evidence based, short term psychological intervention.	✗	✓	✓	✗	✗
Clean Slate Clinic 02 3813 8104 Telehealth alcohol withdrawal and recovery service for individuals struggling with alcohol dependence.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗
Gidgee Healing 1800 443 433 Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Social and Emotional Wellbeing (SEWB) Services (culturally and clinically integrated). Alcohol and other drug treatment, recovery and support services.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗
Headspace National 1800 650 890 Early intervention and treatment services for young people (12-25 years) at risk or living with mental illness. eheadspace online and phone support available.	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗
Isa Psychology 0408 643 673 – (Telehealth only) Targeted, evidence based, short-term psychological intervention.	✗	✓	✓	✗	✗
Lives Lived Well 1300 727 957 LIME (Low Intensity Mental Health Empowerment) offers support for people aged 12 and above, with five free sessions available in person, by phone or video call.	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗
North and West Remote Health (NWRH) 07 4744 7600 Psychological counselling service.	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗
Wellbeing in Schools early intervention PROJECT (WiSE) For young people at school who are at risk, or diagnosed with, a mild to moderate mental illness.	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗
Commonwealth Psychosocial Support Program – Brokerage program that purchases capacity building wrap around activities that will promote recovery, independence and social inclusion.	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗
R Health 1800 595 212 NewAccess Program - Teleservice Mental health counselling service via telehealth. Up to six sessions of low intensity CBT.	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗
Universal Aftercare Service Selectability Queensland 1800 133 123 Psychosocial response to support people following a suicide attempt or suicide crisis.	✗	✗	✗	✓	✗