

# *Evaluation of Assessment Tools: First Evaluation*

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## ***Introduction***

Recently, the Runanga has noted a continued increase of Maori men with dual diagnosis, presenting to their mental health services. Some are becoming chronic tangata whaiora while still only in their mid to late twenties. Yet others will respond to an appropriate recovery focused programme. In order to direct these tangata whaiora to a comprehensive treatment regime, it appears that assessment tools and practices continue to be crucial. This is based on the assumption that health outcomes for Maori males that are dual diagnosed, are significantly influenced by the efficacy of the initial assessment received at the time they first presented to the mental health system.

These assumptions are based primarily on the organisational experience of the Runanga. However, it could be argued that concerns by our organisation are also being seen at a wider inter-service level. Therefore, the evaluation could have wider implications to the mental health and addictions sector, specifically dual diagnosis. At a national level, the evaluation could have potential importance in that it could assist with improved service delivery and therefore improved health outcomes for Maori.

The Research and Development Unit were successful in obtaining funding for this project through the Registration of Interest 'Addressing Gaps in Mental Health Services' funding round. Following the acceptance of the proposal an evaluation plan and aims was created and agreed upon by both the WDHB and the Research and Development Unit.

## ***Evaluation Aims***

The evaluation is a scoping exercise that aims to identify, document and evaluate current assessment tools and practices. In particular, those tools and practices conducted during initial assessment of Maori males identified as having a dual diagnosis, by providers in the Waikato area. The overall aim is a comprehensive analysis of such tools and practices. This will provide clear evidence regarding efficacy, appropriateness and use, as well as any future areas for development or improvement.

## ***Evaluation Approaches***

There were three key approaches used to complete the evaluation. The kaupapa Maori approach was the predominant method used. Qualitative methods and literature reviews were the secondary methods. Data collection occurred through the use of participant discussions, review of assessment tools, and the collation of tangata whaiora information.

## ***Key Findings***

A total of fifty five tools were reviewed for the purposes of the evaluation. These tools encompassed the areas of dual diagnosis, drug and alcohol and mental health. Eight services were involved in discussing issues pertaining to dual diagnosis assessments - three of these services provided a total of eleven Maori male tangata whaiora files. It is clear from the findings that there are many tools to assess dual diagnosis. However, what has become evident is the need to develop an overarching best practice dual diagnosis assessment package. This would contain a dual diagnosis comprehensive needs assessment, followed by a range of specific tools in the area of mental health and drug and alcohol.

Also provided in this package would include guides to involvement of the whanau as part of the assessment process. The dual diagnosis package would include a holistic view of health and focus on assessing physical, mental, whanau, spiritual health as well as considering previous experience of care. The findings of the evaluation suggest that the process in which the assessment is carried out is just as important as the tool itself. Based on these findings, the evaluation has identified the following processes as important for Maori in a dual diagnosis assessment:

- involvement of whanau and key support networks;
- the ability to select from a range of services;
- an assessment process that reflects tikanga Maori;
- a strong focus on relationship building; and,
- the continued use of more holistic assessment tools.

However the findings of the evaluation also stress the importance of making this process an option, as opposed to presuming that this process is what all Maori tangata whaiora desire. The results show that areas of the National Mental Health Standards are not being met in regards to service provision for dual diagnosis, of which assessments are one part. For this reason areas for further development include: refining holistic assessment tools/processes; involving whanau in the assessment process; conducting regular reviews of assessment; gathering information from a range of external sources as part of the assessment; and workforce development.

In summary, the following areas have become evident:

- 1) Assessment tools in the dual diagnosis sector are poorly equipped to assess a person holistically. Strong evidence suggests that holistic processes are required to treat the whole person;
- 2) Despite the number of tools available, other tools are still being created by services;
- 3) Maori require culturally appropriate care. However, Maori may not want a Maori service. Similarly, Pakeha may not want a mainstream service. Available service options are of importance;
- 4) To provide culturally appropriate care, culturally appropriate training is required;
- 5) The level of information regarding the implementation and effectiveness of Maori processes to the wider health sector is largely unknown;
- 6) Assessment tools are only as effective as the assessor using the tool. In tandem with this, is that training requirements for dual diagnosis is largely unknown;
- 7) External information provides a greater overview of issues. Good overall inter-agency collaboration increases overall better outcomes;
- 8) Currently, Mental Health standards regarding whanau participation are not being met by the majority of organisations;
- 9) When whanau are involved, better outcomes are achieved;
- 10) Gaining external information increases overall outcomes of care;
- 11) The more comprehensive the information and where assessments are reviewed, better outcomes are achieved.

## ***Recommendations***

As a result of data analysis of the participant discussions, tangata whaiora information and literature, the evaluation team recommends that:

- 1) Assessments across the dual diagnosis sector incorporate a holistic approach that includes spirituality, relationships, cultural identity and consider previous experience of care.
- 2) A best practice dual diagnosis assessment package is developed including guidelines, tools and a range of assessment processes.
- 3) Services provide the option of Maori processes of care for tangata whaiora, and receive appropriate training to do so.
- 4) Appropriate training of Maori processes of care is conducted utilizing both mainstream and kaupapa Maori methods of training.
- 5) Further research is conducted exploring ways of implementing Maori processes in dual diagnosis assessments.
- 6) Workforce development issues such as lack of formally trained staff is addressed and a dual diagnosis training or formal qualification be developed.
- 7) Further research is conducted on the level of inter-agency collaboration, and the best methods to improve the communication channels between services.

- 8) The National Mental Health Standard of whanau participation at all levels of assessment and treatment is adhered to, leading to overall improved outcomes for tangata whaiora.
- 9) Whanau of tangata whaiora with dual diagnosis are valued and involved throughout the entire assessment process.
- 10) Gaining information from and working collaboratively with a range of external sources is included as a required process to assess dual diagnosis.
- 11) To increase the overall efficacy of initial assessments and outcomes for tangata whaiora, regular reviews are conducted as part of the assessment process and in accordance with the National Mental Health Standards.