

Core skills for all healthcare workers

By Paul Healey – September 2020

Sectors

1. Aged Care

Aged care is the support provided to older people in their own home or in an aged care (nursing) home. It can include help with everyday living, health care, accommodation, and equipment such as walking frames or ramps.

2. Mental Health

Mental health services diagnose and treat people with mental disorders; putting in place strategies to prevent mental disorders and ensuring that primary healthcare workers can apply key psychosocial and behavioural science skills.

3. Disability

The disability workers provide services to people with disability. The huge diversity of the people they support means that the services that they provide are many and varied; what they have in common is the desire to improve the lives of people with disability.

4. Alcohol and Other Drugs

The Victorian alcohol and other drug treatment services workforce performs a vital role in providing effective, safe, and high-quality alcohol and other drug treatment and support services.

Family violence, including (but not limited to):

5. Child protection

Child protection aims to keep children safe where there is serious risk of harm. Serious risk of harm may arise from a single event or a series of concerns over time.

6. Homelessness

Family violence is one of the main reasons women and children become homeless.

7. Elder abuse

Elder abuse is an intentional act or failure to act that causes or creates a risk of harm to an older adult. An older adult is someone age 60 or older. The abuse often occurs at the hands of a caregiver or a person the elder trusts.

Core skills

For workers in human services (AOD services, child protection, family violence, disability, mental health, community services, etc.)

1. First aid and CPR

2. Infection control, including:

- Standard precautions
- Hand hygiene before and after all patient contact
- The use of personal protective equipment, which may include gloves, impermeable gowns, plastic aprons, masks, face shields and eye protection
- The safe use and disposal of sharps
- The use of aseptic "non-touch" technique for all invasive procedures, including appropriate use of skin disinfectants
- Reprocessing of reusable instruments and equipment
- Routine environmental cleaning
- Waste management
- Respiratory hygiene and cough etiquette
- Appropriate handling of linen

3. Personal protective equipment (PPE) including fit testing

PPE protects the healthcare worker from exposure to blood and body fluids / substances. PPE that complies with relevant Australian Standards should be readily available and accessible in all health services.

Fit testing is a qualitative or quantitative method that is used to evaluate the fit of a specific make, model, and size of mask on an individual and to ensure that it is worn correctly.

4. Environmental control

Healthcare workers must have adequate procedures for the routine care, cleaning and disinfection of environmental surfaces, beds, bedrails, bedside equipment, and other frequently touched surfaces, and that these procedures are being followed.

5. Transmission-based precautions

Transmission-based precautions (TBPs) are used in addition to standard precautions when standard precautions alone may be insufficient to prevent transmission of infection. TBPs are used for patients known or suspected to be infected or colonised with epidemiologically important or highly transmissible pathogens that can transmit or cause infection.

6. Signage

Understanding Signage: it should be positioned prominently outside the room of a patient in TBPs. This is to ensure staff and visitors do not enter without appropriate PPE.

7. De-escalation skills: addressing behaviour of concern

De-escalation is a person-centred approach to reducing and preventing conflict. It is based around using verbal and physical expressions of empathy and building an alliance with the person. Communication is the key to de-escalation.

8. Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training (ASIST)

In ASIST, people learn to apply a suicide intervention model. It helps caregivers recognise when someone may be at risk of suicide. It then explores how to connect with them in ways that understand and clarify that risk, increase their immediate safety, and link them with further

help. Over 80,000 people in Australia have attended ASIST which is available in all states and territories.

Visit: <https://www.livingworks.com.au/programs/asist/> for more information

9. Social media in the workplace

Social media in the workplace can speed up communication and limit the stream of emails between workers. It can also foster a sense of innovation and freedom, both of which are important contributors to effect communication.

10. Reporting: legal requirements and processes

Health Service Workers need to be familiar with their reporting obligations in relation to children and adults exposed to sexual, domestic, and family violence, etc

11. Person centred care

Patient-centred care is about treating a person receiving healthcare with dignity and respect and involving them in all decisions about their health. This type of care is also called 'person-centred care'. It is an approach that is linked to a person's healthcare rights.

12. Human rights

Human rights are the right to work in just and favourable conditions; the right to social protection, to an adequate standard of living and to the highest attainable standards of physical and mental well-being; the right to education and the enjoyment of benefits of cultural freedom and scientific progress.

13. Trauma informed care

Trauma-Informed Practice is a strengths-based framework grounded in an understanding of and responsiveness to the impact of trauma, that emphasises physical, psychological, and emotional safety for everyone, and that creates opportunities for survivors to rebuild a sense of control and empowerment.

14. Food handling

Staff skills and knowledge must include food safety and food hygiene matters. Food safety issues cover what staff must do to food to keep food safe. Food hygiene practices cover what staff must do to keep things clean, so they do not contaminate food.

15. Communication including multicultural awareness

Cultural awareness is defined as "the ability to recognise the different beliefs, values, and that someone has based on that person's origins, and it allows a person to build more successful personal and professional relationships in a diverse environment.

16. Join the union: better paid and safer

Union members get better wages better sick leave and holiday leave entitlements and have better working conditions, work fewer hours and have more job security.