

Mental Health Promotion Action Link

KINDLING THE FLAME IN WESTERN AUSTRALIA

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What is the Mental Health Promotion Action Link?

Mental Health Promotion Action Link (MHPAL) is a recognised group of individuals interested in the promotion of mental health and wellbeing. The group was established in 2002 following the launch of the Western Australian Mental Health Promotion and Illness Prevention Policy (Department of Health, 2002). This poster presentation will explain the role of the group.

The group provides a forum for coordinated action and advocacy for mental health promotion. The objectives of the group have been developed cognizant of State Government mental health objectives, as outlined in the WA Mental Health Promotion and Illness Prevention Policy (Department of Health, 2002). MHPAL has a growing membership from across Western Australia. The group meets regularly to provide professional development and networking opportunities. The email network and newsletters keep members informed of relevant and current issues in practice and research.

MHPAL provides a voice for mental health promotion, prevention and early intervention in Western Australia. It advocates and provides expert comment on policy and project development and implementation across various sectors. MHPAL acts as a resource to health, education and non-government sector professionals.

Objectives

To improve the capacity for mental health promotion in Western Australia by:

- Promoting the importance of mental health promotion across sectors and communities
- Advocating for and supporting mental health promotion research, policy, practice and infrastructure
- Encouraging evidence based policy and practice

Group Strategies

- Serve as a mechanism for information sharing on mental health promotion
- Take on a leadership role in informing and responding to state wide mental health issues

Principles

- Intersectoral action
- Inclusivity
- Accountability
- Evidence based research and action

Challenges to the Group and How We Overcame Them

Challenge	Strategy
Western Australia has a huge geographical area.	The use of tele- & videoconferencing for meetings and presentations, together with the email network have helped to connect members.
Creating a common language, understanding and vision due to the range of backgrounds and professions.	Members are invited to attend meetings and share information about their mental health promotion activities. The group is currently mapping the skills assets of members to identify future speakers and preferences. The Terms of Reference have been refined and are outcome based.
MHPAL receives no funding and is not incorporated.	MHPAL survives and flourishes on the goodwill of members through in-kind support. MHPAL participation has been built into the job descriptions of some members. The group's plans are specific, achievable and outcome-focused.
Centrally coordinated mental health promotion activity is lacking in WA.	MHPAL developed democratic group processes to increase information sharing between members and sectors. The group formed relationships with other stakeholders (such as the Office of Mental Health, WA Association for Mental Health and Auseinet) to share information and coordinate actions.

What is Mental Health Promotion?

Any action taken to maximise mental health and wellbeing among populations and individuals. It focuses on improving environments (social, physical, and economic) that affect mental health and improving the coping capacity of communities as well as individuals (Department of Health, 2002).

What is Mental Illness Prevention?

Interventions that aim to reduce the initial onset of a mental illness by reducing risk factors and enhancing protective factors (Department of Health, 2002).

State Policy informs Mental Health Promotion Action Link Practice

The Western Australian Mental Health Promotion and Illness Prevention Policy (2002) made the following four outcomes a priority for action. These outcomes helped to shape the objectives and strategies of MHPAL.

Mental Health Promotion Outcomes

- Develop community and workforce capacity to promote mental health
- Develop, strengthen and support multi-sectoral partnerships to promote mental health
- Develop and / or support initiatives to reduce stigma and discrimination

Mental Illness Prevention Outcomes

- Support initiatives that aim to reduce the incidence of conduct disorder, anxiety, depression (including postnatal depression) and suicide

Examples of Sectors Represented

- Non-government mental health agencies
- Education & Training
- Consumers and Carers
- Community Development
- Health
- Students
- Universities
- Community Members

References

Department of Health Western Australia (2002), Mental Health Promotion and Illness Prevention Policy. Mental Health Policy, Department of Health Western Australia