



National Comorbidity Project

Improved Services Initiative

Some Questions & Answers About the Initiative

Q How many services were funded in Victoria?

A Twenty-seven services were funded to undertake a range of service improvement activities to build capacity to respond to comorbid clients.

Q Who are the AOD NGO services who received funding in Victoria?

A Banyule Community Health Service, Bendigo Community Health Services, Jesuit Social Services, Knox Community Health Service, Monashlink, Ovens and King Community Health Service, Taskforce, The Buoyancy Foundation, Uniting Care Moreland Hall, Odyssey House, PenDAP, Upper Hume Community Health and YSAS (Youth Substance Abuse Service) AnglicareVic, Bass Coast Community Health Centre, Bentleigh Bayside Community Health (SEADS), Inner East Community Health Centre, ISIS Primary Care, Open Family, Plenty Valley Community Health Centre, Reconnexion, SHARC APSU, Turning Point Alcohol and Drug Centre, Youth Projects, Windana Society, Western Region Alcohol & Drug Services, Western Region Health Centre (Health Works)

Q Are all the Improved Services Initiative projects the same?

A All the Improved Services have the key focus of building organisational capacity to better identify and treat people who experience comorbid substance abuse and mental illness. The projects are not about service delivery.

Q What is the difference between the terms comorbidity and dual diagnosis?

A Comorbidity is a term used to describe the co-occurrence of one more disease or disorder. Comorbid disorders are common. Professor Wayne Hall, Dr Michael Lynskey and Dr Maree Teesson editors of *'What is Comorbidity and why does it matter?'*¹ provide a detailed discussion and definition of comorbidity.

¹ National Drug Strategy and Mental Health Strategy, 2001, National Comorbidity Project, Commonwealth Department of Health and Aged Care. Executive Summary

Both terms in the context of the project, refer to co-occurring drug and alcohol use and mental illness. Monograph 61² page 91 also provides clarity on the use of these terms. Generally, it can be said that as terms they best describe the service response to people experiencing substance use and mental illness. Clinicians rather than those who experience them use the terms.

Q Can non-funded AOD NGO's access and use the information and resources of the National Comorbidity Project.

A Yes, information will be posted on the Improved Services Initiative page of VAADA's website. (A specific website for the Improved Services Initiative is under development. Additionally, VAADA will publish a Newsletter - *Bringing It Together* – to provide information about the initiative.) Alternatively, contact Gail Ward at VAADA gward@vada.org.au for further information.

Q What is the self-assessment that VAADA is assisting services with?

A VAADA is supporting the Improved Service Grant recipients to undertake a baseline self-assessment using the DDCAT (The Dual Diagnosis Capability in Addiction Treatment Index Toolkit)

The DDCAT is a self-assessment instrument. It is a validated tool that can be incorporated into existing quality processes and measures an organisation's capacity to respond to people with a co-occurring substance issue and a mental illness. The DDCAT was altered to reflect the Australian context.

Q How is the DDCAT different to the COMPASS tool?

A Basically, the DDCAT is free and in the public domain. The COMPASS tool is a licensed product. The VDDI (Victorian Dual Diagnosis Initiative) have a licence to use the COMPASS tool. For further information see 'What's the Difference? DDCAT vs COMPASS' document, also available on this webpage.

Q Can any AOD NGO's use self-assessment tools.

A Yes, the DDCAT is free and is in the public domain. For further information about the DDCAT contact Gail Ward gward@vaada.org.au or alternatively, you can contact your Dual Diagnosis Clinician to find out more about COMPASS and ways they can assist your service. The VDDI have developed a range of other resources for use with Mental Health, Psychiatric Disability Rehabilitation Support Services and Alcohol and Drug Treatment Services. Contact your local Dual Diagnosis clinician for further information.

² "Barriers and Incentives to Treatment for Illicit Drug Users with Mental Health Comorbidities and Complex Vulnerabilities" Monograph Series No 61 , Australian Government, Department of Health and Ageing , National Drug Strategy, page91