National safety and quality standards for digital mental health services

The Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care (the Commission), is developing national safety and quality standards for digital mental health services (national standards).

The development of national standards is a significant first step in providing safety and quality assurance for digital mental health service users, and best practice guidance for service providers and developers.

The Commission will provide draft standards to the Australian Government Department of Health for approval in June 2020.

Background

In 2018-19, the Commission spoke to consumers, carers, clinicians, service providers and experts about how to build user confidence, increase adoption rates, and enhance consumer and carer empowerment and choice in digital mental health services.

Stakeholders from across the digital mental health sector supported the development of national standards and a certification framework to support the safety and quality of digital mental health services.

The Commission heard that the success of a certification framework will depend on standards that are trusted and accepted by consumers, carers, clinicians and service providers.

Based on the consultation findings and a review of the literature, the next phase of this project will focus on the design and development of national standards and associated resources.

National standards

Standards will provide an authoritative indication of the actions or outcomes expected of a digital mental health service. They will cover clinical and technical domains including:

- Evidence base
- Efficacy
- Quality and performance
- Privacy and data security
- Accessibility.

The Commission will align the new standards with the National Safety and Quality Health Service (NSQHS) Standards which provide a nationally consistent statement about the level of care that consumers and carers expect from health services.

The standards will consider the design, delivery and technology platform of the digital mental health service.

The Commission will review existing standards and regulations to avoid duplication.

Consultation

The Commission will continue targeted consultations with consumers, carers, clinicians, service providers and technical experts to inform the development of the standards.

Public consultation is planned for March and April 2020.

Questions?

For more information, please contact the Commission's project team at DMHS@safetyandquality.gov.au or visit safetyandquality.gov.au/dmhs

What is a digital mental health service?

The Commission defines a digital mental health service as: a mental health, suicide prevention, or alcohol and other drugs service that uses technology to facilitate engagement and the delivery of care.

This includes information, digital counselling, treatment and peer to peer support services delivered via telephone, videoconference, websites, SMS, webchat, and mobile applications (apps).

You can access a range of digital mental health services on the Australian Government's digital mental health gateway Head to Health.