



FACT SHEET for service providers

Clinical and Technical Governance Standard

The National Safety and Quality Digital Mental Health (NSQDMH) Standards aim to improve the quality of digital mental health service provision, and to protect service users and their support people from harm.

The three NSQDMH Standards include 59 actions related to clinical and technical aspects of digital mental health services. They describe the level of care and the safeguards that a digital mental health service should provide.

The Clinical and Technical Governance Standard aims to ensure that service providers have systems in place to maintain and improve the reliability, safety and quality of care. This includes protecting the privacy of users and being transparent about how their data are used. It also includes ensuring the technology is secure and stable.

What is clinical and technical governance?

Clinical governance is an integrated part of a health service provider's corporate governance. It ensures that everyone is accountable to service users, consumers, their support people and the community for assuring the delivery of safe, effective and high-quality services. Accountable groups include those delivering the digital mental health service, and managers and members of governing bodies, such as boards.

Technical governance is the system by which the current and future use of information and communication technology is directed and controlled. It is also an integrated part of a service provider's corporate governance. Technical governance ensures that the technology systems underpinning the delivery of clinical care are safe, assure privacy and confidentiality, and are able to provide stable and secure services in keeping with service users' needs. This includes making sure services are usable and accessible.

Why is this standard important?

The standard recognises the importance of governance, leadership, culture, safety and quality systems, the workforce and the need for a safe environment in which high-quality digital mental health care is delivered.

There is growing evidence of the importance of digital mental health services in the delivery of services to consumers, carers and families.¹ Some digital mental health services can be as effective as in-person services, but others have not been rigorously evaluated. Negative effects can and do occur with digital mental health services²⁻⁴, just as they do with in-person services.

If you meet this standard

- Your organisation has clinical governance, technical governance, and safety and quality systems in place to improve the safety and quality of digital mental health care.
- Your safety and quality systems work effectively with management systems.
- Your organisation promotes safe and high-quality digital mental health care for service users.
- You are confident that the data from service users are kept private and confidential.
- You consider usability and accessibility to be important, and you partner with service users, consumers, carers, families and support people to improve these aspects of care.
- Your workforce has the right qualifications, skills and supervision to ensure they provide safe, high-quality digital mental health care to service users.





What can you do to implement this standard?

- Identify the governing body responsible for the clinical and technical governance of your digital mental health services.
- Review and strengthen your current clinical governance arrangements.
- Review and strengthen your current technical governance arrangements.
- Ensure that roles and responsibilities, reporting lines and accountabilities are clear, and that the culture and leadership of the organisation support safety and quality.
- Consider the high-risk elements in your digital mental health service context – this may include the privacy, transparency, security and stability of your digital services.
- Comply with legislation and regulations, and deliver best practice.
- Implement a systems approach to risk and incident management across clinical and technical domains.
- Fill gaps by partnering with service users, consumers, carers, families and support people, and your organisation's workforce and leaders to develop or adapt structures and processes.
- Monitor, analyse and report on clinical and technical performance.
- Maintain a safe environment that minimises risk for service users and consumers, and preserves their dignity.

Find out more

The complete NSQDMH Standards, including the 59 actions, and associated fact sheets and other materials are at www.safetyandquality.gov.au/dmhs.

You can contact the project team for more information at dmhs@safetyandquality.gov.au.

References

1. Titov N, Dear BF, Niessen O, et al. User characteristics and outcomes from a national digital mental health service: A review of the Australian MindSpot Clinic. *Lancet Digital*. 2020 Nov [cited 2020 Nov 26]; 2:e582–93. Available from: [https://www.thelancet.com/journals/landig/article/PIIS2589-7500\(20\)30224-7/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/landig/article/PIIS2589-7500(20)30224-7/fulltext)
2. Akbar S, Coiera E, Magrabi F. Safety concerns with consumer-facing mobile health applications and their consequences: a scoping review. *Journal of the American Medical Informatics Association* 2019; 27(2):330–340.
3. Torous J, Firth J, Huckvale K, Larsen ME, Cosco TD, Carney R, et al. The emerging imperative for a consensus approach toward the rating and clinical recommendation of mental health apps. *Journal of Nervous and Mental Disease* 2018; 206(8):662–666.
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