

# Mental Health Standards assessment framework

The National Safety and Quality Mental Health Standards for Community Managed Organisations ([Mental Health Standards](#)) aim to improve the quality of mental health service provision in community managed organisations (CMO's), and to protect service users and their support people from harm.

## Assessment Framework

The assessment framework outlines the process for CMO's seeking accreditation. The Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care (the Commission) is responsible for coordinating the accreditation scheme for the Mental Health Standards. This is known as the Australian Health Service Safety and Quality Accreditation Scheme ([AHSSQA Scheme](#)).

To become accredited, CMO's must be eligible and then pass an assessment to show they have met the Mental Health Standards. Assessments are conducted by [independent accrediting agencies](#) that are approved by the Commission. Service providers seeking accreditation can follow the five steps outlined in **Figure 1**.

**Figure 1** Five steps to undergoing accreditation against the Mental Health Standards.

- 1 Confirm the standards apply to you
- 2 Complete a self-assessment
- 3 Engage an approved accrediting agency
- 4 Undergo assessment
- 5 Continuous evaluation and quality improvement

## 1. Confirm the standards apply to you

Mental health services can be delivered in various settings including in-person at community or residential locations, in people's homes, through outreach or remotely.

Some mental health services will be required to meet the Mental Health Standards under their contract requirements for delivering those services.

The Mental Health Standards require CMO's to consider the safety and quality of care in its business decision-making which includes partnerships and subcontractor arrangements that are responsible for the delivery of mental health services.

### Digital Mental Health Module

Some CMO's may provide digital mental health services as part of their offerings. These organisations may benefit from using the Commission's [Digital Mental Health Module for Community Managed Organisations](#) which supports a single streamlined accreditation process that:

- reduces the number of assessable actions from 142 down to 96 actions
- reduces the duplication in evidence preparation and assessment days
- results in accreditation to both the Mental Health Standards and the [National Safety and Quality Digital Mental Health Standards](#) (Digital Mental Health Standards).

CMO's should ensure that their accrediting agency is approved to undertake assessments to the primary set of standards as well as the Digital Mental Health Standards.

## 2. Complete a self-assessment

Prior to an assessment taking place, CMO's are encouraged to do a gap analysis. This process includes:

- assessing their current safety and quality systems
- understanding the kinds of evidence required that demonstrates that they meet the Mental Health Standards.

The Commission's [self-assessment tool](#) supports CMO's to understand any areas for improvement required prior to a formal assessment against the Mental Health Standards. This process may only take a few weeks to prepare, but for others it may require significant changes across the organisation taking several months.

The Commission's [implementation resources](#) provide useful information to understand the intent of the actions, suggested strategies for improvement and examples of evidence.

## 3. Engage an approved accrediting agency

The Commission approves accrediting agencies that can undertake assessments to the Mental Health Standards. These accrediting agencies are independent from the Commission but must follow the policies and rules outlined in the AHSSQA Scheme.

Engaging an approved accrediting agency involves completing an application for assessment with the accrediting agency's intake forms and processes. CMO's should confirm the number and type of services within scope of the assessment and identify any [actions that may not be applicable](#) from the Mental Health Standards.

The accrediting agency will confirm the evidence they require to be prepared to undergo assessment. This should also include which of the Digital Mental Health Standards actions are not applicable to that service provider, given the types and context of services provided. The accrediting agency will clarify dates and arrangements for an assessment.

## 4. Undergo assessment

Assessment must have a notice period of at least **four weeks** given to the CMO prior to being undertaken by the accrediting agency. An initial assessment is conducted by assessors from the accrediting agency. They will interview a range of people, including the CMO's governing body, members of the workforce and where possible, they will also seek to engage with service users.

During the assessment:

- the [PICMoRS framework](#) is used by assessors to evaluate the safety and quality systems and clinical governance operations of the organisation. Entry and exit meetings should occur onsite at the commencement and close of the assessment
- each applicable action from the Mental Health Standards are rated using the rating scale described below. If all applicable actions are rated as 'met' for the initial assessment then they receive the award of accreditation.

CMO's and approved accrediting agencies must follow the requirements outlined in the relevant [advisories](#) for the Mental Health Standards.

### Rating scale for assessments

#### Met

All requirements are satisfied.

#### Met with Recommendations

The requirements of an action are largely being implemented by the service provider, with the exception of a minor part of the action, where additional implementation is required.

'Met with Recommendations' may not be awarded at two consecutive assessments where the recommendation is made about the same service provider and the same action. In this case an action should be rated as 'Not met'.

#### Not Met

Part or all of the requirements of the action have not been implemented.

#### Not Applicable

The action is not relevant in the service context being assessed. The Commission's direction relating to [not applicable actions for the sector](#) need to be taken into consideration when awarding a not applicable rating and assessors must confirm the action is not relevant in the service context during the assessment visit.

Some assessments will include an observer from the Commission. This is to ensure the rules of the AHSSQA Scheme are being followed. Observers will be confirmed with the CMO prior to the assessment.

### Exceptions report, Remediation and Final report

If there are one or more actions rated as 'met with recommendations' or 'not met', the CMO will be given an **exceptions report** within 5 business days of the initial assessment that describes the findings that support these ratings.

A remediation period of up to 60 business days is where CMO's can address the requirements needed to meet the actions. Following the remediation period, a final assessment is conducted on the actions that were rated 'met with recommendations' or 'not met' from the initial assessment.

The accrediting agency determines the outcome of the final assessment. The agency must deliver the final assessment report within 20 business days of completion of the final assessment detailing findings for each action assessed, including suggestions for improvement, and requirements to achieve full compliance on actions that are rated 'met with recommendations'.

Accrediting agencies then have 30 days to finalise the reporting process.

### **After a service provider is accredited**

The accrediting agency is responsible for issuing certificates and testimonials to service providers who achieve accreditation.

The Commission receives data on assessment outcomes monthly from accrediting agencies. This data is used to update the Commission's [register](#) of accredited service providers.

## **5. Continuous evaluation and quality improvement**

Accredited CMO's must continue their monitoring and quality improvement on a regular basis as a requirement of meeting the Mental Health Standards. They are required to comply with requirements of the AHSSQA Scheme during this period to maintain accreditation status.

### **Maintaining accreditation status**

Accreditation to the Mental Health Standards lasts **three years**. A CMO must commence **assessment at least four months** prior to their accreditation expiry date.

All accredited CMO's must alert their accrediting agency as soon as possible when:

- CMO's develop, redesign or deliver new services
- there is a change of ownership or a merger with an organisation also providing in-scope services
- there are changes to the CMO that could increase risks of harm to the service users or impact the service quality.

Certain circumstances may require an additional assessment to maintain the status of accreditation, known as an out-of-cycle assessment. An out-of-cycle assessment is required if these criteria are met.

- Scope of service delivery is significantly different.
- Significant changes in governance of the CMO that could increase the risks of harm to the consumers or impact upon the quality of service delivery.

The accrediting agency will confirm their determination with the Commission to decide the extent of re-assessment required. This may include a desktop review or a verification of the relevant actions in the Mental Health Standards to maintain their accreditation status for that cycle.

If these criteria are not met, an out-of-cycle assessment is not required. In the case of new in-scope services or programs, the accrediting agency may provide an updated testimonial. The updated testimonial will reflect that the new services or programs are covered under the award of accreditation but were not assessed.

**For more information**

Please visit: [safetyandquality.gov.au/mh-cmos](https://safetyandquality.gov.au/mh-cmos). You can also email the Safety and Quality Advice Centre at: [AdviceCentre@safetyandquality.gov.au](mailto:AdviceCentre@safetyandquality.gov.au) or call 1800 304 056.

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