New guide to improve safety in community mental health

November 26 2010

WorkCover NSW has commended the NSW Mental Health Coordination Council for the development of a new resource to improve work health and safety in community mental health.

Acting General Manger of WorkCover's Work Health and Safety Division, Peter Dunphy, said the Council's new *Working Safe Toolkit,* launched in Ballina today, will help the industry better manage workplace safety risks.

"The resource is designed to assist the mental health and non-government sector to develop sound risk management practices in relation to home visiting and policy setting," Mr Dunphy said.

"The toolkit has been designed to educate, reinforce and encourage a 'safe and aware' workplace culture by highlighting responsibilities for management and staff.

"The guide was the result of the *Working Safe Project* – an initiative to apply safe work practices effectively within the complex work environment presented by community mental health," he said

WorkCover was a member of a reference group that provided technical advice and assistance during the development of the toolkit which provides practical guidance on safe practices for home visiting and establishing policies for safe systems of work.

The reference group also included representatives from the health and community services and the insurance industry and identified key factors that enhance workplace safety issues in such as staff training and the importance of interagency protocols.

Mental Health Coordinating Council CEO, Jenna Bateman said the toolkit will help make major inroads into managing hazards and reducing risks in such an unpredictable work environment.

"The resource will have significant practical application in workplace and will assist in leading organisations in this industry through a cultural change to address safe work practices," Ms Bateman said.

"By using this resource, managers of organisations can be proactive in establishing a safe workplace culture while retaining a supportive and recovery-focused service for consumers," she said.

Mr Dunphy said WorkCover commends the work done by the Council to produce such high quality guidance material. This demonstrates the commitment shown by the sector to improve health and safety outcomes.

"WorkCover will continue to work with the community services and mental health sector to share experiences and build our understanding of the challenges to address inherent safety risks and ultimately reduce injuries across the industry," he said.

The toolkit includes a home visiting guide, check sheets and sample safety and risk assessment policies.

For more information on the guide visit http://www.mhcc.org.au/resources/working-safe.aspx

For information on workplace safety visit **www.workcover.nsw.gov.au** or call **13 10 50**

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