



mentalhealthonline

Model of Care

September 2025





people

Acknowledgement of Country

We respectfully acknowledge the Wurundjeri People, and their Elders past, present and emerging, who are the Traditional Owners of the land on which Swinburne's Australian campuses are located in Melbourne's east and outer-east.

Executive Summary

The Mental Health Online **Model of Care** is information for Mental Health Online staff, students and consumers as well as a guide for the wider community, referral agencies and stakeholders. By describing what is important to our service and what we strive to achieve we seek to better meet the needs of consumers accessing Mental Health Online, and better support our staff and students in delivering care. The aim when implementing the Models of Care is to achieve a balance between improving consumer outcomes and ensuring efficient and effective use of specialist mental health resources.

The **Model of Care** has been prepared by and for Mental Health Online to:

- articulate and implement the objectives, principles and values of the services it provides
- provide high-level explanation of key service provision elements
- define who our clients are, how they access our services and the services we will provide.

The Mental Health Online **Model of Care** is a living document that will change over time to reflect research and evaluation, the results of continuing consumer, staff and stakeholder contributions, the political, environment, social climates and other elements at play in a mental health context. However, the overriding principles shall be enduring.



Our **Focus of Care** outlines the role of online mental health supports within the stepped-care framework. It provides the overview of the consumer journey with Mental Health Online, and how the service supports the needs of a range of consumer groups.

The **Principles of Care** describe the nature of our service delivery. The services provided by MHO are underpinned by the values of person-centred and evidence-based practice, accessibility and engagement, improvement and innovation.

The **Components of Care** outline the functions of MHO service delivery.

Our Vision

Offer accessible, engaging and innovative mental health care for the community based on contemporary research and delivery methods.

Our Mission

Our mission is to ensure people experiencing mental health difficulties have access to free information, effective digital treatment programs, and appropriate further care recommendations, accessible whenever and wherever it's needed.

Our Values

Accessibility

We strive to remove barriers to accessing evidence-based interventions for common mental health disorders by empowering consumers to access support on any device, anytime, anywhere.

Integrity

We act ethically, with honesty, fairness and respect.

Responsiveness

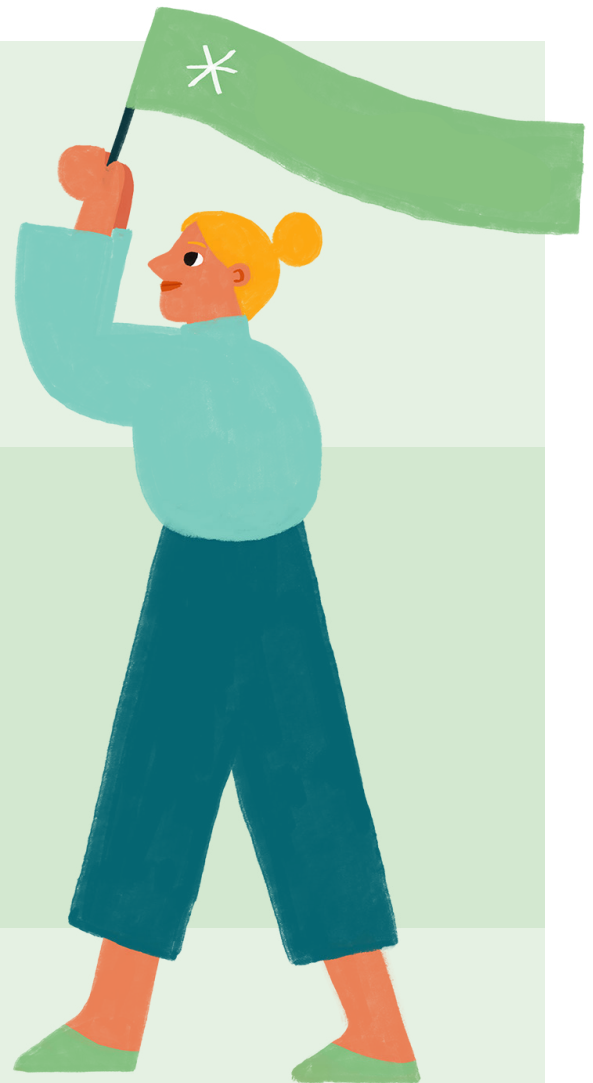
We work with consumers and practitioners to provide resources that are grounded in consumer need, recognise that there may be different needs at different stages of the recovery journey, and enable user choice through providing a variety of treatment options.

Quality

We seek to provide a high quality, trusted and safe service with a focus on continuous improvement through a reflective and responsive approach to internal and external feedback provided by staff, consumers and stakeholders.

Innovation & Translation

We seek the development of the e-therapy space including contribution to the research base and translation of research to provide effective, engaging and evidence-based services to meet the increasing wellness needs of the community.



Service Overview

Mental Health Online is a digital mental health service (DMHS) delivered by the National eTherapy Centre at Swinburne University of Technology.

Funded by the Australian Department of Health as a part of the Telephone Counselling, Self Help, and Web-Based Support Programmes Measure, Mental Health Online seeks to provide education, assessment, and treatment for high prevalence mental health concerns in the Australian community.

Digital Mental Health Services, like Mental Health Online, are an important supplement to in-person services and provide an alternative source of mental health support.

(National Safety and Quality Digital Mental Health Standards, 2021)

Mental Health Online also supports the development of the health care workforce through supporting 5th and 6th year psychology students through a placement program and contributes to the e-therapy evidence base through research and evaluation activities.



01 - Information

The provision of high-quality information and resources to enable consumers and health care professionals to gain a comprehensive understanding of high prevalence mental health disorders generally, and of anxiety disorders in particular



02 - Treatment Programs

Comprehensive and effective treatment programs

Focus of Care

Access to Mental Health Online is free of charge and is intended to be suitable for a people with high prevalence mental health concerns such as depression or anxiety.

Target Population

Mental Health Online services are targeted toward adults (over the age of 18) experiencing mild to moderate symptoms of high prevalence disorders including:

**Depression
(Depression Online and
Depression-Anxiety)**



**Generalised Anxiety
Disorder (Anxiety and Worry
and Depression-Anxiety)**



**Social Anxiety Disorder
(Social Anxiety Online)**



**Obsessive-Compulsive
Disorder (OCD Stop)**



**Panic Disorder
(Panic Stop)**



**Post-Traumatic Stress
Disorder (PTSD)**



Mental Health Online programs are available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week both nationally and internationally.

The Therapist Assist program is available to adults (over the age of 18), residing in Australia from 9am – 5pm AEDT, Monday to Friday. Clients of the Therapist Assist program must provide their personal contact details as well as the detail of their treating GP.

People with needs that cannot be met within the MHO Model of Care are referred to other services e.g., community services, psychologists or to their GP for support accessing appropriate support options.

Responding to Complex Needs

At Mental Health Online, complex needs include individuals presenting with mental health or social situations which are outside the scope of service (i.e., depression and anxiety disorders) or are beyond the level of severity which can adequately and safely be managed by MHO therapists. Such examples include eating disorders, drug and alcohol misuse, personality disorders, mood disorders such as bipolar affective disorder, psychotic disorders including schizophrenia, domestic violence, relationship issues.

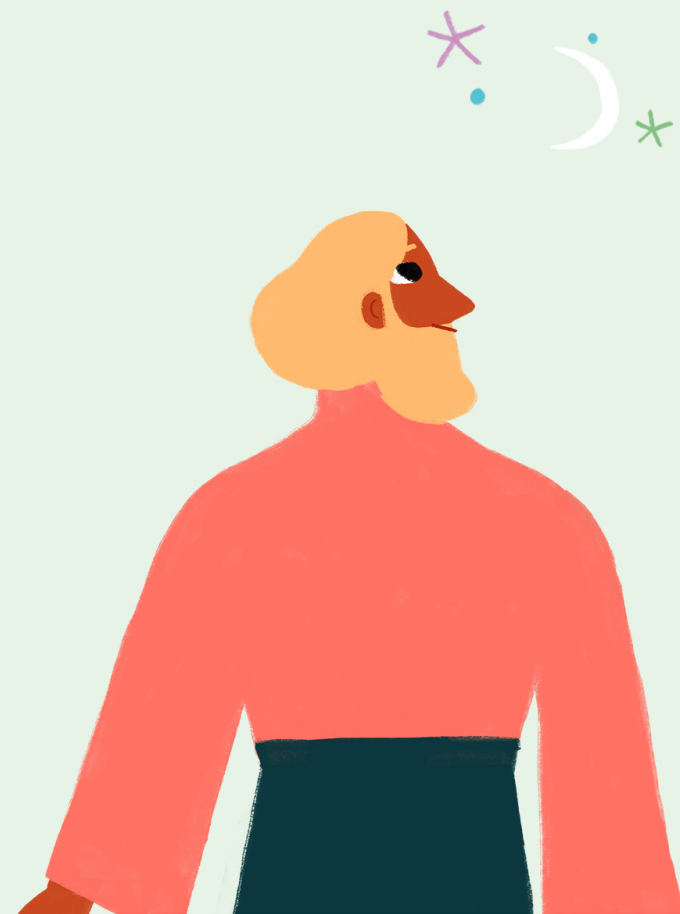
Every opportunity is taken to direct consumers with mental health symptoms outside of MHO's scope of practice to alternative services through program information and on the 'where to find help' page on the website. Consumers may also use the Contact Us page to inquire directly to the service about their mental health needs and receive referral information.

Caring for Aboriginal, CALD and LGBTQI Consumers

There is increasing recognition by health and community services in Australia that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, those who are culturally and linguistically diverse, and those who identify as part of the LGBTQI communities, have unique mental health and wellbeing needs. While each of these groups is distinct, people who identify as part of these communities are more likely to experience oppression, stigma, discrimination, and violence.

When working with consumers from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, culturally and linguistically diverse, and LGBTQI communities, Mental Health Online is aware of:

- Providing culturally sensitive mental health information, delivered in a way that respects the consumer's cultural and/or religious background
- The effects of inter-generational trauma, grief and loss in assessing client need
- How entrenched disadvantage may have resulted in mistrust of the health system
- Any cultural and/or religious factors which may be relevant to the way care is provided
- How traditional communication practices may make closed questioning
- (Yes/No) an unhelpful way of seeking information from a client, and adjusts communication accordingly
- Providing culturally appropriate referrals, offering consumers a choice of being referred to a culturally-specific service provider, where available, or a provider with appropriate skill and experience.



Principles of Care

01

All consumers have access to clearly described, high quality, evidence-based information and resources to help them understand high prevalence mental health difficulties and their treatment.

02

All consumers are provided with referral options.

03

Visitors are provided with enough information about MHO programs to make an informed decision about becoming either a user or a client of the service.

04

Staff who provide information for the website are competent, well-trained and supported in their work.

05

The contribution to ongoing research, innovation, evaluation and training is valued, encouraged and supported.

06

The aspiration of being a lead agency for e-therapy mental health services for adults in Australia is recognised through all service components.

07

All service provision aligns with the Australian Charter of Healthcare Rights and Charter components are clearly articulated both on the website and throughout treatment.

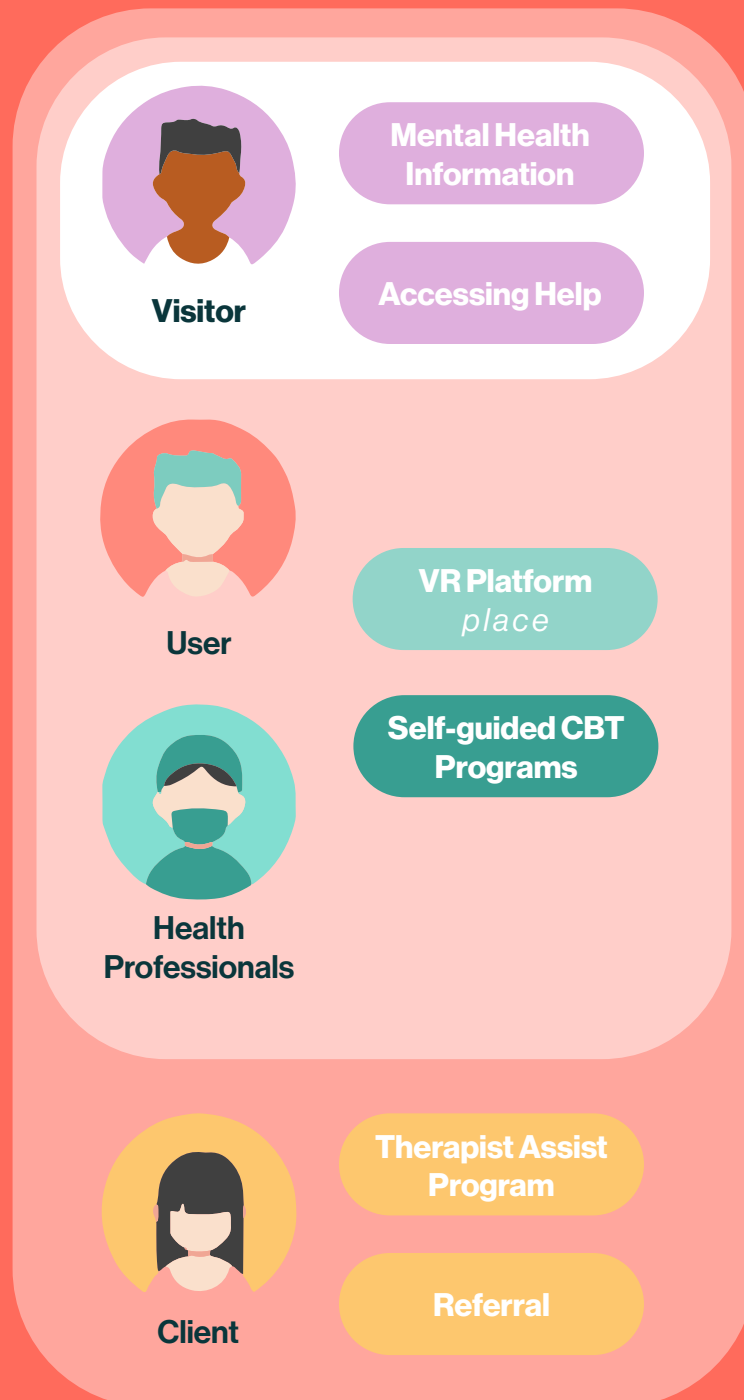
08

Our website and the information contained therein conforms to Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) accessibility standards, to ensure the greatest proportion of the population has access to MHO services



Components of Care

Mental Health Online offers the following functional components:



Mental Health Information and Accessing Help

The Mental Health Online website will be maintained for the benefit of members of the public, potential referring professionals and potential users and clients of the service.

The mental health disorders supported by the website are:

- Generalised Anxiety Disorder (GAD)
- Depression (Depression Online)
- Social Anxiety Disorder (SAD)
- Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder (OCD Stop)
- Panic Disorder (Panic Stop)
- Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)

The website has several components:

- Descriptions of high prevalence mental health disorders intended to educate, normalize and provide treatment and referral options information about what MHO does, the programs it offers and how to access them
- A portal for health care professionals to access the CBT-based treatment programs and resources to supplement and support current practice
- Frequently asked questions about the website and MHO programs information about alternative mental health supports, including links to crisis support services for those in need of immediate support.

All visitor to the Mental Health Online website have access to mental health information and referral resources. Consumers wishing to access place and MHO programs are required to create a user account, this includes Health Practitioners wanting to use MHO resources in their work.



Self guided Treatment Programs

Self-Guided treatment programs are based on a **Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT)** model and are designed to help people understand the nature of mental health problems, to learn skills and strategies to manage symptoms and improve overall mental health and wellbeing.

Users can work through any of the treatment programs at their own pace. Or they may opt to access therapist support to help them apply module information to their unique situation.

Users have **access to their chosen program for 12 months**, and may change between programs at any time through their account.



place

place is a series of virtual reality (VR) mindfulness practices which utilise immersive nature environments to support users to practice mindfulness. **place** may be used as a stand-alone program or can be incorporated into either the self-guided program or Therapist Assist program.

place offers three levels of guidance, each with either a male or a female voiceover to guide the user through a simulated environmental scape.

Therapist Assist Program

The Mental Health Online Therapist Assist program operates in an online, telehealth environment; therapy is provided by email, with optional online live chat and video communication with clients over a 12-week period. Therapeutic support is provided to enable clients to understand and apply the information provided in the self-guided treatment programs to their particular situation.

Clients of the Therapist Assist program are required to provide their contact details and the detail of their General Practitioner.

All clients will be offered an intake call which is an assessment of their presenting problem, its severity and complexity. It also provides an opportunity for people to speak to a therapist about the service and develop shared treatment goals for the program.

Therapy is limited to addressing symptoms and challenges associated with high prevalence disorders for which module information has been developed. Issues or situations outside of these that arise during the course of the Therapist Assist Program may require referral to a more appropriate service for ongoing support. Clients completing the Therapist Assist program may also be offered referral options should they wish to continue with treatment.

Clients may access multiple rounds of Therapist Assist, there is no limit to the number of times a person may use the program. Users and clients may reengage with Mental Health Online or the Therapist Assist program at any time by creating a new account, reactivating their existing account, logging back in to their registered account or re-registering for the Therapist Assist program through their user account.



Sustainability

To ensure the sustainability of this Model of Care, there are significant priorities for Mental Health Online including operational and clinical governance, workforce planning and development, change leadership, evaluation and continued innovation, and ultimately fuller integration of digital mental health services into the broader Australian mental health system.

01

Governance

MHO has adopted an internal governance structure acting on behalf of staff, students and consumers of the program.

02

Leadership

Leadership is built on a shared sense of responsibility for the success of the service and is not restricted to those who hold designated leadership roles.

03

Culture

Culture is a key driver of governance effectiveness; models our core values and brings a sense of purpose to the work we do.

04

Succession Planning

Ensures business continuity and performance, particularly during times of shifting leadership and change.

05

Staff Supervision and Training

Provides opportunity for staff and students to set goals which not only align with the Model of Care but also broader development objectives and career aspirations.

06

Service Achievement and Quality

Mental Health Online seeks to achieve service objectives outlined in the Department of Health contract while simultaneously becoming a national leader in the development and provision of online therapy.





Contact Details

Website www.mentalhealthonline.org.au

Email contactmho@swin.edu.au

Mail NeTC Clinical Manager
National eTherapy Centre Swinburne University of Technology H99
PO Box 218
Hawthorn Victoria 3122
Australia

Developed by Carly Clutterbuck, Dr. Hailey Tremain and Fiona Foley