



ABSTRACT FOR DIVERSITY IN HEALTH 2010 CONFERENCE

Title of presentation: Stepping Out of the Shadows – Reducing stigma about mental illness in Australia’s CALD communities.

Theme: Mental Health/Right to Health

Proposed formats	Proposed length of presentation
Format 1: individual presentation	30mins (includes 10mins for Q&A)
Format 2: panel presentation	45mins (includes 15mins for Q&A)

Format 1: Individual presentation

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This presentation will showcase a recent national initiative by Multicultural Mental Health Australia (MMHA) to reduce stigma about mental illness in Australia’s culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities.

Stigma creates barriers to seeking help, early detection and negatively affects upon recovery rates and prognosis. It also isolates individuals and their families and reduces their capacity to participate in their communities and the broader society in meaningful and satisfying ways.

Although stigma about mental health and illness exists in all cultures around the world, people from CALD communities who experience mental health issues/illness face a double disadvantage. This means increased discrimination because someone has a mental illness *and* belongs to an ethnic community. This may result in those people having even less contact with and knowledge of the services and networks that are available for them.

The stigma reduction program uses a train-the-trainer model to train Expert Trainers from each state and territory who then train and support Community Trainers to deliver the package directly to CALD communities.

Since the program began, MMHA has trained 45 individuals from 39 agencies across the country to become Expert Trainers. These agencies include clinical and NGO mental health services, as well mainstream and multicultural health & welfare agencies.

Findings from the recent national evaluation of the project will be presented. The project model, along with key enablers and challenges will be discussed.

This presentation will be of interest to those engaged in health education initiatives targeting CALD communities and to those interested in how stigma can be tackled in CALD communities. Handouts will also be made available to participants.

Format 2: Panel presentation

The above presentation also has the capacity to be adapted for a panel presentation with **ADEC** and the **Goulburn Valley Adult Mental Health Service**. This would highlight the practical application of the MMHA Stepping Out of the Shadows Stigma Reduction initiative through a partnership approach.

ADEC have been funded by the Victorian Department of Health to undertake a state-wide project coordination role for the implementation of the project in Victoria. The Goulburn Valley Adult Mental Health Service (Victoria) are one of many agencies that have been trained as an “Expert Trainer” by MMHA for implementing the stigma reduction community education package with CALD communities.

A panel presentation would be preferred as it would showcase how the national initiative partners with a State-based project coordinator and a regional project implementer for the practical implementation of the project at the state level. This can then highlight key enablers and challenges from the various perspectives of national, state and regional project partners.