



Maternal & Child Health Post Graduate Nursing and Workforce Planning Collaboration Group

Terms of Reference

OFFICIAL

Purpose

The purpose of this document is to set out the Terms of Reference for the Maternal and Child Health (MCH) Post Graduate Nursing and Workforce Planning Collaboration Group (the Group) that brings together the Department of Health (DH), Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV), Safer Care Victoria (SCV) and Program Coordinators from universities who offer Graduate Diploma courses in a collaborative and solution focussed forum to better understand and respond to workforce planning and education of our emerging MCH workforce across Victoria.

It establishes the agreed roles and functions of the Group, both collectively and individually, as follows:

1. To strengthen formal communication and dialogue between the universities, DH, SCV and MAV.
2. A strategic alignment of the current initiatives and exploration of targeted solutions required to ensure the sustainability of high quality MCH services in the future.
3. To ensure that universities are aware of DH/SCV/MAV directions, policy and MCH Service program changes, so that policy directions, workforce planning and developments can be reflected in the education of future MCH nurses.
4. To ensure that DH/SCV/MAV are aware of university policy and directions affecting curriculum design and provision of education, including clinical practicum.
5. To discuss issues in the preparation of post graduate students for competent practice as MCH nurses in the Victorian MCH Service.
6. To identify the commitment and time pressures that providing a placement has on services and advocate for appropriate resourcing to support the placement and preceptorship of students.
7. To jointly plan actions to enhance the skills of the Victorian MCH Service nurse workforce to meet the desired outcomes of the service and maintain professional standards.
8. To provide an ongoing consultative forum for the monitoring and implementation of the Victorian Maternal and Child Health Nurse Student (VMCHNS) Employment Model utilised in extreme workforce shortages.
9. To share information regarding research, policies, programs and other initiatives that have the potential to impact on the MCH Service.
10. To strengthen connections with related workforce governance groups, such as the EPC Workforce Readiness Sub-Working Group, to align policy and strategic directions and have a cohesive approach to supporting and growing the MCH workforce through education planning and development activities.

Membership

Membership of the Group will consist of:

- Department of Health – Manager MCH Program and Governance (Chair), and a representative from the EPC Expansion Project team
- Safer Care Victoria (SVC) - Principal Maternal Child Health Nurse Advisor
- La Trobe University - Program Coordinators, MCH Nursing Program
- RMIT University - Program Coordinators, MCH Nursing Program
- Federation University - Program Coordinator, MCH Nursing Program
- Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV), MCH Policy Adviser
- Executive of the MCH Coordinators Group (Inc) representative

The following membership extends to the VMCHNS consultative forum standing agenda item:

- Department of Health – Health Workforce Policy Team representative
- Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation (Victorian Branch) [ANMF] representative
- Victorian Association of Maternal and Child Health Nurses (VAMCHN) representative
- MCH nurses and students from participating LGAs

The group may consult with expert stakeholders and invite them to meetings to contribute to discussions.

Meetings

Meetings will be organised by DH and hosted on Microsoft Teams. There will be a minimum of 6 meetings per year. Meetings will be aligned to student enrolment, MCH scholarship program and reporting cycles. The meeting frequency may be adjusted dependent upon identified and agreed requirements.

The secretariat for the Group will be provided by DH. Minutes and actions will be recorded and distributed within five working days of the meeting.

Background

Following sector feedback relating to workforce shortages, in 2016 the Department of Education and Training (DET) commissioned:

- the Centre for Community Child Health to provide advice on the professional development and supervision needs for the MCH nursing workforce
- ACIL Allen Consulting to research and analyse MCH nurse workforce issues, including a projection of supply and demand over ten years to inform future workforce planning and policy development.

Key issues impacting the supply of MCH nurses include:

- Estimates suggest there is a known national continuing shortfall in the number of registered nurses (including midwives) over the next ten years
- The ageing MCH workforce: the proportion of the MCH nursing workforce aged over 55 years has steadily increased in recent years
- The number of students undertaking the postgraduate MCH qualification is not increasing, with cost of study identified as a barrier to undertaking post graduate study
- A negative perception of job prospects and ongoing permanent employment by the potential workforce, with recent graduates highlighting that it is difficult to secure a permanent position in local government

- The pre-requisite that students must secure a clinical placement in the MCH service in local councils at enrolment is a limiting factor. Councils can be resistant to accepting students for a clinical placement due to the perceived time commitment required to supervise students.

Key issues impacting the demand for the MCH service:

- Overall population growth and an increasingly diverse and complex communities
- Increased service provision required due to reform. The 2017-18 State Budget provided an \$81.1 million package of reforms to provide additional support for families, including the introduction of an additional consultation for families at risk of or experiencing family violence and expansion of the Enhanced MCH Service.
- The 2018 Election commitment to expand supports to Victorian new mums and dads through a \$232.2 million investment over four years to implement a comprehensive package of supports. This includes the following elements that will increase demand for the MCH nurses: extra sessions for first time parent groups, additional specialist telephone advice via the MCH Line to support sleep and settling, additional sleep support through home visits, and the establishment of seven new Early Parenting Centres (EPC).
- Investment through the 2022-23 State Budget to establish an additional (eighth) EPC.

Current initiatives in place to address existing MCH Nurse workforce supply challenges include: the annual MCH Nursing Scholarship program; MCH workforce support grants, the Hard to Staff incentive, and the DH \$50 million Nursing and Midwifery Workforce Development Fund.

Maternal & Child Health Nurse Workforce

The MCH service is led and delivered by qualified MCH Nurses. There are over 1800 qualified MCH Nurses in Victoria, with approximately 1500 being employed by council or council contracted MCH Services.

To practice as a MCH nurse in Victoria, a MCH nurse is required to hold current registration with AHPRA as:

- a Registered Nurse (Division 1)
- a Registered Midwife, and
- in addition to the above registrations, hold an accredited postgraduate degree/diploma (or equivalent) in maternal and child health nursing.

Federation University, La Trobe University or RMIT University are the only three tertiary providers in Victoria that offer postgraduate degree/diploma in Maternal and Child Health Nursing:

- Graduate Diploma of Health, Child and Family Health Nursing (Federation University)
- Graduate Diploma in Child, Family and Community Nursing (La Trobe University)
- Graduate Diploma in Child and Family Health Nursing (RMIT University)

Review

These Terms of Reference are to be reviewed at the first meeting of each calendar year.