

Progress Report

November 2003 – January 2004

Therapy Assistant Project (TAP)

Midwest & Murchison Health Region

Summary of the project aims:

- To improve best practice within a range of different therapy assistant models operating in the Midwest & Murchison Health Region, including the Midwest ITA model, by developing and piloting practical and usable materials and procedures.
- To promote and make the information developed available to a wider audience in a user friendly way

Achievements in November - January

Recruitment and Orientation

A partnership has been formed with the Wheatbelt Health Region to work together to implement and evaluate the recruitment and orientation guidelines developed as part of MMHR therapy assistant project. The Wheatbelt are in a position to recruit significant numbers of therapy assistants in a bulk intake in 2004. This partnership has benefits for:

- Midwest & Murchison Region: It will provide a great opportunity to evaluate the use of the resource and guidelines in another area and thus result in a package that can transfer across health regions.
- Wheatbelt Health Region: They are able to use resources that have already been developed and are in use.

Outcome Measures

Use of goal attainment scaling for therapy assistant programs has begun in Geraldton and the Midwest areas in January. Training for new staff has been planned for February as part of the orientation modules in the allied health graduate program.

The Allied Health staff have developed a program template for use with individuals or small groups involved with a therapy assistant. This form manages to keep many traditional aspects of a program template while incorporating the GAS outcomes measures. A system for recording the results of goals at the end of a program period has been developed and will begin being used at the conclusion of current programs. A database of GAS goals has been developed and will be added to as new goals are created. This allows therapists to search for, and have as an example, goals for specific areas.

Guidelines

Guidelines for supervision have joined the guidelines for responsibilities of therapists, therapy assistants, line managers and the primary therapist that are currently under trial in Geraldton and the Midwest. Evaluation of the effectiveness of these guidelines, especially related to supervision types and levels, is well underway.

Training

The training requirements for Allied Health professional, working with therapy assistants, have been discussed and are forming part of the Allied Health new graduate program. This involves a learning module on the Therapy Assistant Program and another using goal attainment scaling and writing measurable goals. The new graduate program will also include training in supervision skills, technical aspects of videoconferencing and clinical videoconferencing, essential skills for working with Therapy Assistants.

Technology

The MMHR Internet site continues to contain up-to-date information on the project

<http://www.mmhr.org.au/Home.asp?documentid=289>

A new MMHR intranet site is currently being developed. This will incorporate the Therapy Assistant Program. This Therapy Assistant Program section will include up-to-date information on policy, procedure and guidelines as well as practical information about how the program works and therapy activities. We hope to have this to begin use by the end of February.

A database to record training completed by Therapy Assistants has been completed and has begun use. Evaluation of this will occur over the next four months.

*The Project Officer took annual leave for 4 weeks during December, 2003.

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