



Overview of the Victorian Allied Health Assistant Workforce Recommendations for the health sector

The Victorian Allied Health Assistant Workforce Recommendations

“The Allied health professional will meet you first, work out your plan and your goals with you and then the Allied health assistant will help you reach those goals by seeing you regularly”

Consumer

Context

All Victorian consumers have the right to access safe and effective therapy and supports. Allied health assistants have a role in this, under the delegation and supervision of Allied health professionals. The optimal utilisation of Allied health assistants enables greater access to services for a larger number of consumers, whilst allowing Allied health professionals to complete more complex work.



Figure 1: The Department's Five Year Allied health assistant workforce objectives

Purpose

The Department of Health, in collaboration with Monash Health, have developed the Victorian Allied Health Assistant Workforce Recommendations and Resources. These aim to meet the Department's Allied health assistant workforce objectives (Figure 1). The recommendations support the optimal utilisation of Allied health assistants across the health, aged care and disability sector. They have been developed through broad consultation and are underpinned by the three core principles of respect, learn and grow. These eighteen recommendations and implementation resources cover the areas of pre-employment training, workforce planning and governance, consumer

centred therapy and supports, recruitment, orientation and induction, workplace training, professional development and career pathways.

The Victorian health sector

The Allied health assistant role has been developed to support the provision of Allied health services, under the delegation and supervision of Allied health professionals.

The health sector has traditionally employed Allied health assistants in hospital and community settings to support single professions. The recent growth of multidisciplinary Allied health assistant roles, particularly in community health settings, has been perceived as valuable to patient care and resulted in Allied health assistant career growth.

The Allied health assistant role has been developed to support the provision of Allied health services, under the delegation and supervision of Allied health professionals. Extreme workforce shortages during the COVID-19 pandemic have seen Allied health assistants working in surge models to provide therapy and supports traditionally performed by nursing, with Allied health assistants utilised as more general ward support. With predictions of ongoing workforce shortages, there are significant risks to be considered in this approach. The Allied health assistant role must be clearly delineated outside emergency response times as Allied health assistants are trained to support Allied health.

Allied health assistants in the health sector are graded according to the enterprise agreement:

Grade 1 Allied health assistant refers to an Allied health assistant who is unqualified or an Allied health trainee working under the direct supervision of an Allied health professional. Automatic progression to a Grade 2 Allied health assistant role will occur for relevant candidates when they gain an Allied Health Assistance certificate qualification.

In health, Grade 1 Allied health assistant roles are rarely recruited to except in the instance of traineeships. The health sector has moved heavily



towards qualified Allied health assistant classifications.

Grade 2 Allied health assistant refers to an Allied health assistant with Certificate III or Certificate IV Allied Health Assistance qualification. A Grade 2 Allied health assistant completes work delegated by, and under the supervision of, an Allied health professional. Grade 2 Allied health assistants perform the work of a Grade 1 Allied health assistant with a higher expectation of capability. Grade 2 Allied health assistants are expected to take part in quality initiatives and student supervision. Student supervision and quality improvement projects are encouraged based on the individual's experience, capability and professional development goals. A Grade 2 Allied health assistant will progress to Grade 3 Allied health assistant by appointment only.

Grade 3 Allied health assistant refers to an Allied health assistant qualified with a Certificate IV Allied Health Assistance or equivalent*, with at least three years full time equivalent working experience. They complete work delegated by, and under the supervision of an Allied health professional. They perform the clinical work of a Grade 2 Allied health assistant with a higher

expectation of capability, autonomy and leadership. Grade 3 Allied health assistants are also expected to take a lead role in quality initiatives and student supervision and coordination.

** In Victoria, equivalence is defined as an equivalent RTO level qualification.*

Key messages for the health sector

- Despite Allied health assistants being an established support workforce, optimal utilisation is yet to be fully realised.
- To further realise optimal utilisation:
- industry must consult with the VET sector to improve certificate training credibility and graduate recruitment outcomes.
 - career development for Allied health assistants must be established through inclusive workplace cultures, targeted ongoing learning and leadership opportunities.
 - Allied health professional delegation practice must be improved through training and robust governance.
 - contemporary funding must be ensured, cognisant of supervision and delegation requirements, for both public and private health settings.



Recommendations to optimise the utilisation of Allied health assistants across Victoria

Seven key areas of utilisation are covered in the recommendations. While all of the eighteen recommendations are relevant to Allied health assistants, professionals and employers working in the disability sector, the most relevant recommendations are highlighted.



Pre-employment training

Recommendation 1

The Allied Health Assistance training package is regularly reviewed in consultation with the health, disability and aged care sectors at national and local Registered Training Organisation (RTO) level.

Recommendation 2

Incorporate an interview as requirement of the pre-training review for the Allied Health Assistance courses, including an assessment of communication, literacy and numeracy capabilities.

Recommendation 3

The Vocational Education and Training VET sector works collaboratively to ensure the certificate Allied Health Assistance course curriculum is consistent across providers.

Recommendation 4

The Vocational Education and Training VET sector increases clinical exposure and placement experience in pre-employment training.

Recommendation 5

The Vocational Education and Training VET sector provides clear messaging to prospective and enrolled Allied health assistant students as to the role of an Allied health assistant



Workforce planning and governance

Recommendation 6

Workplaces undertake robust workforce planning and redesign processes in relation to the Allied health assistant workforce.

Recommendation 7

Workplace governance structures define role delineation and delegation practices to ensure safe, effective evidence based therapy and supports.

Recommendation 8

The existing supervision and delegation frameworks support the training and practice of supervision and delegation between Allied health professionals and Allied health assistants.

Recommendation 9

Workplaces establish and maintain a culture of mutual respect, equal value and collaboration to promote continual learning and growth of Allied health assistants and the value of the role.



Consumer-centred therapy and supports

Recommendation 10

Consumers are provided with information about the roles of the treating team, and the benefits of having an Allied health assistant involved with their therapy and supports.





Recruitment

Recommendation 11

To improve consistency of graduate knowledge and ensure clear scope of practice parameters, the Certificate III and Certificate IV Allied Health Assistance training is the entry level qualification for all Allied health assistants in all sectors and where equivalence is required, it is transparent and defined clearly.

Recommendation 12

When recruiting Allied health assistants, the interview incorporates behavioural scenarios to evaluate candidate's aptitude and capability to provide safe and effective therapy and supports and appropriate attitudes to learning.



Orientation and induction

Recommendation 13

Workplace orientation for all new Allied health professionals and assistants provides clarity regarding the roles and responsibilities of the Allied health assistant and other professional staff to support a mutually respectful culture.



Workplace competency-based training

Recommendation 14

All competency-based training development aligns with the *Allied health: credentialing, competency and capability framework*.

Recommendation 15

Workplace competency-based training is complemented by working side-by-side with Allied health professionals to develop trusted working relationships and shared knowledge of roles.

Recommendation 16

Workplace competency based training and assessment is undertaken by supervisors who meet relevant requirements.

Recommendation 17

Competency attainment is recorded for transferability between roles and settings.



Professional Development

Recommendation 18

Allied health assistant learning needs are formally identified and addressed to instil life-long learning, maintain performance standards and support career development.

For more information

For full details of key consultation findings, activities a workplace might consider, health sector case examples, indicators of progress and resources, please refer to the full version of the Victorian Allied Health Assistants Workforce Recommendations available at: <<https://vicahaworkforceproject.monashhealth.org>>.

Additionally further Allied health assistant workforce projects supported by the Department of Health are available at: <<https://www.health.vic.gov.au/allied-health-workforce/allied-health-assistant-workforce>>.

