



Australian Association of Social Workers

GPDV Better Outcomes Allied Health Forum
Elizabeth Sommerville
November 2006

Who is the AASW?

The AASW is the professional representative body of social workers in Australia. It was formed in 1946 at the National level, although a number of state branches had formed prior to this.

The AASW is an incorporated company, which is nationally managed by a board of directors, comprised of the director from each of the ten branches, the national president and three national vice-presidents. The AASW currently has about 6,000 members nationwide.

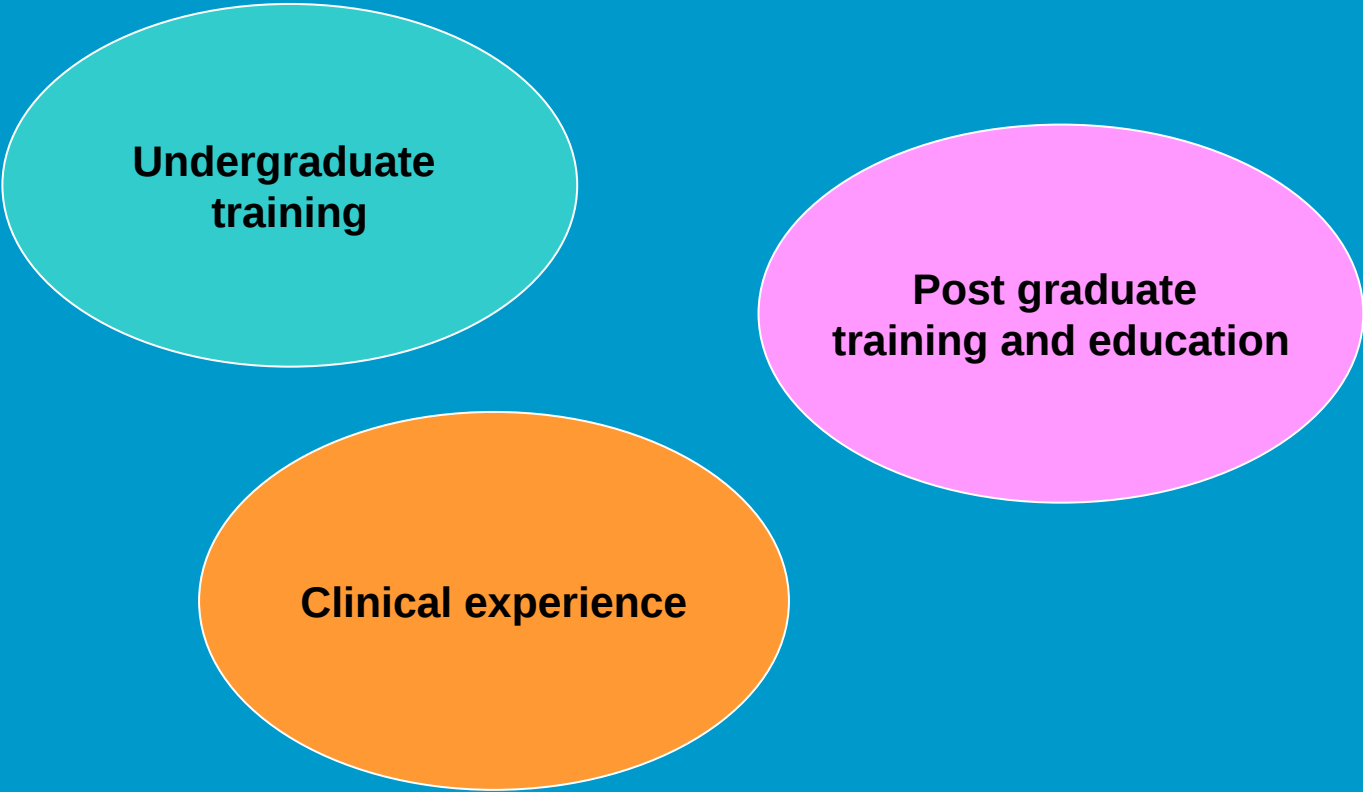
Members of the AASW are required to observe a code of ethics which sets strict guidelines for professional conduct and confidentiality.

The AASW has also developed a set of competency standards for all social workers.

Accreditation Process

- Membership of AASW
- Demonstrated capacity to meet the standards for mental health set out in AASW's "Competency Standards for Mental Health Social Workers 1999"
- Reference from employer/supervisor
- Application submitted to Accreditation Panel of AASW
- Approved applicants can then apply to Medicare Australia for a Medicare Provider No.

Social Work Education and Training



**Undergraduate
training**

**Post graduate
training and education**

Clinical experience

Specific interventions

Mental health social workers share a knowledge base with other allied health professions and provide a range of evidenced based interventions, including:

- Cognitive behavioural therapy
- Interpersonal psychotherapy
- Psycho-education
- Family therapy
- Narrative therapy
- Skills training

Why refer to a Mental Health Social Worker?

**Social workers are
experienced clinicians
in the
assessment,
diagnosis and
treatment of mental
disorders.**

Social Work in Mental Health

- Social work practice occurs at the interface between the individual and the environment
- Social work activity begins with the individual, and extends to the contexts of family, social networks, community and the broader society
- Social workers generally demonstrate a greater capacity to look beyond the illness and treatment issues, to consider the broader human, social and political issues

Social Work in Mental Health

The purpose of intervention is not only treatment / relief of symptoms but also to:

- restore individual, family and community wellbeing
- promote the individual's power and control over their lives
- promote the principles of social justice

Social Work in Mental Health

Within these contexts, social work interventions will include:

- Provision of evidenced based interventions such as:
 - Cognitive Behavioural Therapy
 - Interpersonal Psychotherapy
 - Psycho-education
 - Family Therapy
 - Narrative Therapy
 - Skills Training

Social Work in Mental Health

- Detailed psycho-social assessment identifying connections between mental health problems and complex social contexts
- Assessment of the lived experience of mental illness and its impact on individuals and their families
- Working with individuals, families, groups & communities to find solutions to mental health problems & promote recovery

Social Work in Mental Health

- Working co-operatively and collaboratively with other health care professionals in shared care arrangements
- Working within the guidelines of professional code of ethics, practice standards and legal framework for practice

Social Work Practice

Social workers practise in all the mental health disorder areas listed under GP Mental Health Medicare items.

Social Work Practice

Social workers seek to apply a “strengths based perspective” in assessment and treatment by exploring strengths, stressors and supports.

Social Work Practice

Social workers specialise in working with individuals and families where mental health problems exist in connection with social problems such as family distress, addiction, unemployment, disability, poverty and trauma.

Mental Health Social Workers work in the following programs accessible by GPs:

- Better Outcomes in Mental Health Initiative
- Medicare Plus (Chronic & Complex Needs)
- Better Access to Mental Health Care
- Pregnancy Support Counselling

How do GPs find an accredited Mental Health Social Worker

- AASW website: www.aasw.asn.au
- Contact your local Division of General Practice
- AASW is producing a brochure shortly to be available to GPs
- Social Workers are keen to work with Divisions of General Practice to develop closer networks