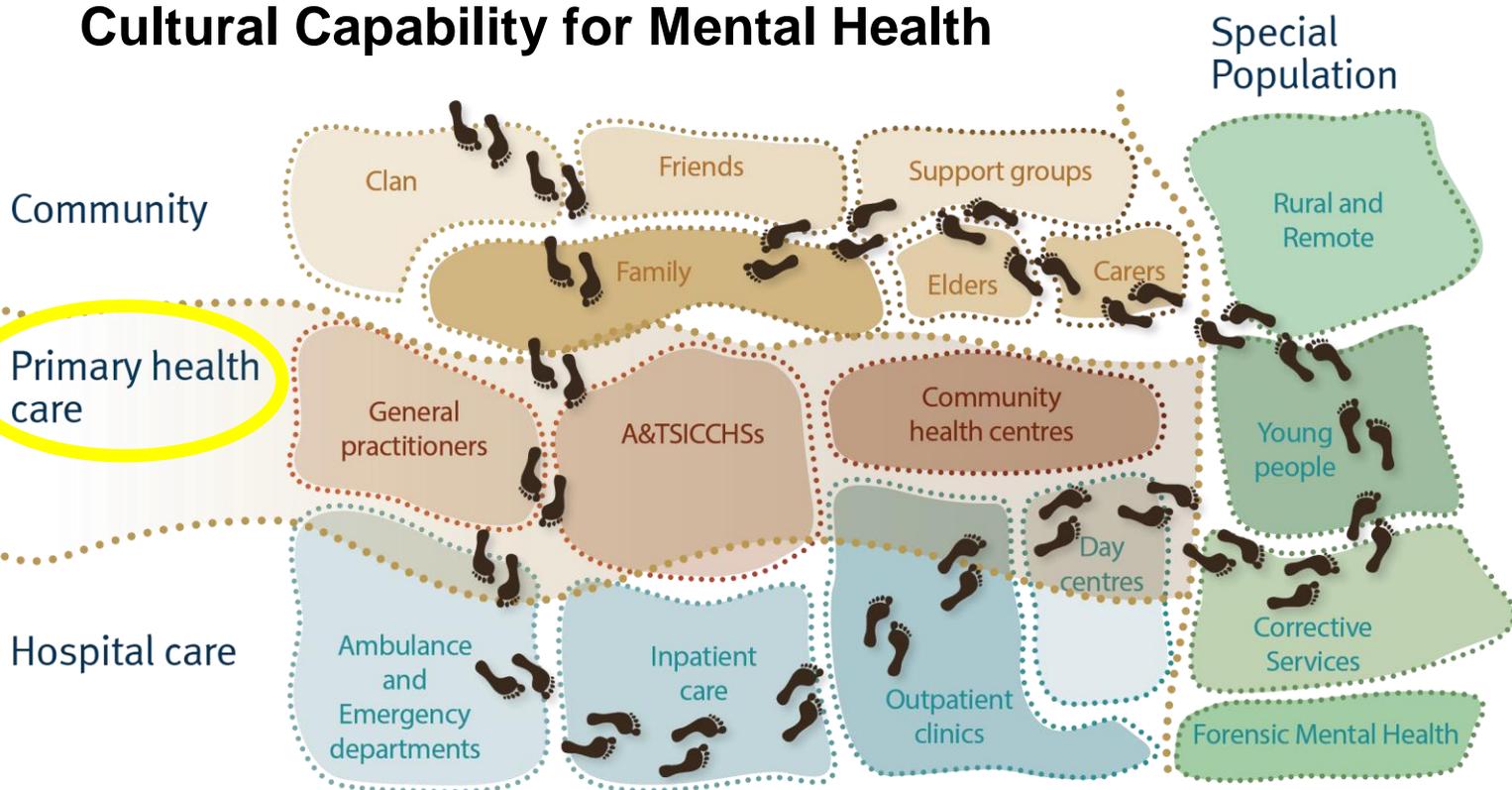


Cultural Capability for Mental Health



Primary Health Care

General Practitioners (GPs)

GPs are often a first point of contact for health services. They can provide essential engagement, assessment and referral, and ongoing support and treatment.

- Ensure good communication with the person's GP.
- Discuss the person's social and emotional wellbeing, and impart your understanding of the cultural context for the person and his or her recovery.
- Comorbidities and complex presentations are more common in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Good GP care can make an important difference to the person's wellbeing.
- Primary Health Networks may provide important links to culturally capable approaches and services.
- Some support networks for GPs include [RACGP Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health](#) and [Indigenous General Practice Registrars Network](#).

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community controlled health services

ATSICCHSs are incorporated organisations governed by a board of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community members. These services provide an approach that covers the holistic definition of health and wellbeing. They can deliver a range of primary and preventative health services (e.g. health checks, immunisation), as well as special programs to meet the wellbeing needs of the community, such as men's groups, women's groups, connection through creative arts, and youth services. The sense of empowerment of the community by controlling the health service is an important aspect of these services. [QAIHC](#) and



[NACCHO](#) are peak bodies representing this sector. Find out if you have any services in your area, and get to know how they support the community.

Community health centres

[Community health centres](#) provide a range of important services to meet [Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health](#) needs, including chronic disease programs, maternity and child health services, [mental health support](#), relationship and sexual health, alcohol and other drugs treatment, and diet and exercise. Community mental health services and [Alcohol and Other Drug Services \(AODS\)](#) provide counselling and support, and can work together to meet the holistic wellbeing of the person.

- Know the services that are available in your local community, the referral paths, and ways that people can engage (e.g. programs that are time-framed, or those that are provided on a 'drop-in' basis). Be aware of any referral criteria or exclusions.
- Make referrals that are appropriate for the person and their cultural context, not just their mental or physical illnesses.
- Be aware of comorbidities, dual diagnosis, and complex needs. Consider how the available services might work together to support the person, without them having to make many appointments or travel to various locations. When services work together, the outcomes are better for the person.
- Sometimes it is necessary to advocate for a person, if services need adapting to culture or if the service criteria don't quite 'work' in a cultural context. Check with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Worker for ways that cultural advocacy can occur.
- Tap into the person's main goals and values to engage the right service. A person may have multiple needs, but if we only 'treat' based on our ideas of the health priorities, we may lose engagement.

Day Centres

Some communities may have day centres that provide other approaches that support social and emotional wellbeing. These may include learning skills for daily living, prevocational skills, creative skills, and social support groups and activities, or drop-in centres like [Headspace](#). Find out what is in your local areas and how they can help.