

Position Description

Discipline Senior Mental Health Social Worker

Classification:	Social Worker Grade 6 - AJ62
Business unit/department:	Mental Health Division
Work location:	Austin Hospital ☒ Heidelberg Repatriation Hospital ☐ Royal Talbot Rehabilitation Centre ☐ Other ☐ (please specify)
	Victorian Public Mental Health Service Enterprise Agreement 2024 - 2028
Employment type:	Fixed-Term Part-Time
Hours per week:	15.2 hours/week- Long Service Leave coverage (12 months)
Reports to:	Divisional Director - MHD: strategically & operationally Director Allied Health - Austin Health - professionally
Date:	July 2026

Austin Health acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the land on which we operate, the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung People of the Kulin Nation. We pay our respects to Elders past and present and extend that respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Position purpose

The Discipline Senior Mental Health Social Worker is a valued member of the Mental Health Executive Leadership Team, working alongside the Divisional Managers, Clinical Directors and other Discipline Senior positions. Its primary functions are to promote, support, improve and lead the mental health social work (SW) workforce within the Division.

The role will actively work toward improving workforce planning and professional representation, enhancing education and professional development coordination, evidence-based contributions, facilitating wellbeing and support for the SW mental health workforce and multidisciplinary environments, provide academic and research linkage to the MHD with internal and external partnerships, and contribute to the strategic directions of the MHD.

The Discipline Senior Mental Health Social Worker provides professional leadership and governance to social workers within Mental Health Division. This role ensures that SW assessments, interventions and plans are based on best practice, are evidence-based, consumer/carer-focused, and consistent with professional and quality standards. The Discipline Senior Mental Health Social Worker ensures the strengths of the discipline are embedded by those who practice in generic or discipline-specific roles. It has a shared responsibility to ensure the Division's mental health workforce enhances consumers' and carers' well-being, works from a culturally appropriate framework, promotes systems thinking and the principles of social justice, consistently applies professional standards and legislative requirements,

and provides high quality practices to ensure the best possible outcomes. The role is responsible for the development and maintenance of professional standards in SW and contributes to the quality processes of the service.

The role has a clearly established collaboration with Austin Health's Director of Allied Health and the organisation's SW network. It holds the portfolios of Family Violence and Child Safety, Families when a Parent has a Mental Illness (FaPMI), and in conjunction with the Carer Lived Experience Lead, family work for the Division.

About the Directorate/Division/Department

The Mental Health Division provides care and services through a comprehensive range of teams to meet the needs of mental health consumers and carers throughout Victoria. Services are located across Austin Health campuses and in the community.

The Mental Health Division incorporates three program areas:

- Adult and Older Mental Health Services
- Infant, Child and Youth Mental Health Services and,
- Mental Health Specialty Services.

All mental health services work within a clinical framework that promotes recovery-oriented practice and supported decision making. This approach to client wellbeing builds on the strengths of the individual working in partnership with their treating team. It encompasses the principles of self-determination and individualised treatment and care.

Position responsibilities

Along with the incumbent Discipline Senior Mental Health Social Worker, the role provides advice to the Divisional Director Mental Health, the Medical Director Mental Health, the three Divisional Managers, Team Managers, Team Leaders and ICYMHS Discipline Senior - SW on social work matters. The Discipline Senior Mental Health Social Worker contributes to strategic vision, planning and professional development. They are responsible for ensuring maintenance of ethical and professional standards of the SW profession and, with the support of relevant managers, to ensure a system of supervision and support is available to all social workers employed within the Division.

Along with the incumbent Discipline Senior Mental Health Social Worker, the role contributes significantly to workforce planning, recruitment, retention and development of social workers within the service. The position is responsible for ensuring a high standard of clinical placements, supervision of social work students, liaison with tertiary institution staff, and participation in formal internal education training activities.

Key Accountabilities:

- Progress agreed strategic directions for social work in mental health workforce planning, while ensuring representation and advocacy for discipline specific perspective and expertise on a range of Austin-wide operational and clinical committees
- Monitor and report on data regarding current SW in mental health workforce to review changes in staffing across the program and specifically monitor attraction and retention trends.
- Provide regular professional supervision to the ICYMHS Discipline Senior - SW and develop the leadership capacity with that role-holder, including establishing strategic and research capabilities in conjunction with the Divisional Manager-CYMHS.
- Demonstrated experience in and knowledge of leading/facilitating clinical groups and professional group supervision sessions.



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- Coordinate the development and maintenance of a SW Entry Level Program within the Division, in collaboration with opportunities for the same across the organisation.
- Promote Austin Health Mental Health Division as an attractive work environment for SW candidates to permanent and fixed term vacancies.
- Receive and provide advice regarding all SW recruitment activities.
- Participate in performance appraisal processes of the senior social workers of the service.
- Work collaboratively with Senior Social Workers and Team Leaders/Managers in identifying SW staff development needs and implementing education and training programs.
- Encourage social workers to participate in quality and safety activities and research and evaluation activities relevant to social work.
- Provide advice to management and the field regarding professional standards, code of conduct and ethics within SW.
- Provide advice to the Mental Health Executive Leadership team regarding the SW professional structure across the Division as required.
- Be an active participant in the Mental Health Executive Leadership team and attend the Clinical & Operational Committee and the Quality Committee monthly meetings.
- Work closely with People and Culture in relation to industrial matters affecting social workers.
- Work collaboratively with the relevant universities to build effective and strong partnerships supporting the workforce of the future, ongoing learning and development, research and design capabilities and career pathways for social workers.
- Lead the development of any SW specific initiatives or evidence-based practice in response to the Victorian Royal Commission into Mental Health findings and recommendations across the service.
- Oversee and provide support to the Carer Lived Experience Workforce (Carer Consultants and Carer Peer Support Workers).
- Assist the Division to roll out evidenced-based, core family interventions across the service as required, linked to KPI's.
- Develop and coordinate a Family/Carer Committee for the Mental Health Division to drive family interventions across the service.
- Line manage and supervise the FaPMI Coordinator and the Specialist Family Violence Advisor roles
- Attend and represent the Mental Health Division at the Austin Health Strengthening Hospital's Response to Family Violence Committee, associated committees with The Orange Door, and assist in rolling out training in the area of family violence to Mental Health staff.

There is an expectation that the Discipline Senior Mental Health Social Worker will form strong and collaborative partnerships with the Director of Allied Health, Austin Health and the social workers within that Department. This includes initiating opportunities for supervision, peer support, discipline specific training and education, project work, student/entry level positions and other opportunities as they arise.

People Management Roles:

- Maintain an understanding of individual responsibility for safety, quality & risk and actively contribute to organisational quality and safety initiatives.
- Ensure incident management systems are applied and a response to local issues and performance improvement occurs.
- Support staff under management to comply with policies, procedures and mandatory training and continuing professional development requirements.

Selection criteria

Essential Knowledge & Skills:

- A commitment to and consistent demonstration of Austin Health values and willingness to hold others to these values
- Extensive, demonstrated clinical experience in a tertiary mental health setting dealing with high risk, vulnerable, complex consumers and their families/carers.



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- Proven ability to provide professional leadership, to initiate, develop and evaluate SW staff and services in a public mental health setting that understands the operational considerations of the work and commitment to professional standards of practice.
- Substantial experience in management and/or supervision of professional staff, including the provision of supervision and training in a mental health setting.
- Advanced expertise and experience in provision of contemporary, evidence-based SW interventions and programs in public mental health settings (across the lifespan) and demonstrated expertise in the provision of treatment for individuals with mental health problems, including dual diagnosis, dual disability and personality disorders, and support for their families and carers.
- Excellent interpersonal and negotiation skills and the ability to communicate effectively with colleagues, senior executive, professional representatives and the broader mental health service system level and across the organisation.
- Demonstrated ability to compile and present publicly at a sophisticated level.
- Demonstrated expertise and knowledge of selection and recruitment, people management policy and procedure.
- Experience in managing complex change in a clinical environment.
- A thorough knowledge of the Mental Health and Wellbeing Act 2022, other relevant legislation including the Carer Recognition Act (2012), Child Youth and Family Act (2005), MARAM Framework and Chief Psychiatrist Guidelines and Victorian Departmental policies and initiatives.
- Well-developed writing skills and an ability to prepare succinct and timely reports and other forms of documentation.
- Well-developed computer skills and familiarity with Microsoft Office products and other health-based systems.
- Knowledge and experience of designing appropriate research studies, applying for ethics approval, conducting research safely and ethically, interpreting results, implementing projects and reporting on findings.
- Current Victorian driver's license.
- Current Working with Children's Check without restrictions.

Desirable:

- Accredited Mental Health Social Work status.
- Familiarity with Government policy and strategic directions in public mental health services.
- Knowledge and experience of developing contracts, tenders, and managing such within role delegation expectations.
- Publication record in SW professional literature.

Professional qualifications and registration requirements

Mandatory Qualifications

- An approved degree in Social Work (Bachelor of Social Work; Master of Social Work), with eligibility for membership of the Australian Association of Social Workers.
- A minimum of 7 years working as a social worker in public mental health, with specific experience in social work leadership roles.
- A Masters Degree or higher in Social Work (not base entry-level) or relevant other field, such as public health, mental health, health administration, etc.
- A current Victorian Driver's License (without restrictions), and ability to drive a work vehicle.
- A current Working with Children's Check (without restrictions).



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Quality, safety and risk – all roles

All Austin Health employees are required to:

- Maintain a safe working environment for yourself, colleagues and members of the public by following organisational safety, quality and risk policies and guidelines.
- Escalate concerns regarding safety, quality and risk to the appropriate staff member, if unable to rectify yourself.
- Promote and participate in the evaluation and continuous improvement processes.
- Comply with the principles of person-centered care.
- Comply with requirements of National Safety and Quality Health Service Standards and other relevant regulatory requirements.

Other conditions – all roles

All Austin Health employees are required to:

- Adhere to Austin Health's core values: *our actions show we care, we bring our best, together we achieve, and we shape the future.*
- Comply with the Austin Health's Code of Conduct policy, as well as all other policies and procedures (as amended from time to time).
- Comply with all Austin Health mandatory training and continuing professional development requirements.
- Provide proof of immunity to nominated vaccine preventable diseases in accordance with Austin Health's immunisation screening policy.
- Work across multiple sites as per work requirements and/or directed by management.

General information

Cultural safety

Austin Health is committed to cultural safety and health equity for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander People. We recognise cultural safety as the positive recognition and celebration of cultures. It is more than just the absence of racism or discrimination, and more than cultural awareness and cultural sensitivity. It empowers people and enables them to contribute and feel safe to be themselves.

Equal Opportunity Employer

We celebrate, value, and include people of all backgrounds, genders, identities, cultures, bodies, and abilities. We welcome and support applications from talented people identifying as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander, people with disability, neurodiverse people, LGBTQIA+ and people of all ages and cultures.

Austin Health is a child safe environment

We are committed to the safety and wellbeing of children and young people. We want children to be safe, happy and empowered. Austin Health has zero tolerance for any form of child abuse and commits to protect children. We take allegations of abuse and neglect seriously and will make every effort to mitigate and respond to risk in line with hospital policy and procedures.



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