

CHOPS: Findings from an evaluation of SVHM homelessness services (2015)

What is CHOPS?

Clarendon Homeless Outreach Psychiatric Service (CHOPS) is a specialist homelessness outreach service of SVHM's Mental Health service. It is specifically designed to work with people with mental illness who are homeless or in tenuous housing. The CHOPS team has a strong multidisciplinary focus and is made up of nurses, occupational therapists, and social workers, with a total caseload of 40 clients at any given time. The team provides assertive and flexible outreach including opportunistic "check-ins" with clients if they are seen on the street, and extends to locating clients who have temporarily moved out of the CHOPS catchment area.

CHOPS also assists in the implementation of Community Treatment Orders, supports community-based care, and sustains an ongoing engagement strategy with clients.

"They all work with me. It's pretty much a team effort between them" – Client

CHOPS Service Usage in 2015

3,851 contacts with clients



2.75 years average length of care

2.5% supported by other SVHM homelessness services

Who used CHOPS in 2015?

81 experiencing or at risk of homelessness accessed CHOPS



76% male
24% female

41 average age

72% born in Australia

3% Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander

A CHOPS Case Study:

A male in his mid-thirties has a long history of schizophrenia and has had an ongoing relationship with CHOPS since 2010. A history of fear and distrust around other support services meant he continued to sleep rough for the first few years of contact. However, gradual engagement enabled him to build a trusting relationship, leading him to accept independent accommodation in 2013. He has slowly developed a more stable lifestyle, which has played an active part in his treatment and recovery. His SVHM consultant psychologist has since provided letters of support for him to be considered for special accommodation requirements (low-medium density housing), and provided assistance with community treatment orders.

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Health Profile of CHOPS Clients

Primary diagnoses at commencement:

78% Schizophrenia/ schizoaffective disorders

15% Other mental health disorders



"It's ongoing - and I don't mind. I need them in my life, I really do. They're literally the anchor. They keep me rock steady in a rough sea. You know what I mean, eh? They really are instrumental in just about everything I do."

- Client

"They were the big change, and they still are to this day. They're just so good at what they do. They're inspirational for me. I can discuss about them to anybody and not feel judgemental, not feel pressured, not - I don't look at people and think to myself they think I'm crazy."

- Client

Cost Reductions Associated with Changes in Service Utilisation

Evaluation findings add to the growing evidence that targeted interventions for people who are homeless can reduce their use of more acute hospital services.

For the 77 CHOPS clients who utilised health services, there was an average cost decrease of:

\$12,989

per person in the six months following service contact

Impact of CHOPS on Healthcare Utilisation

Overall in the six months after episode of care commencement with CHOPS:

44% decrease in total number of ED presentations

27% decrease in number of people who accessed ED

70% reduction in the number of unplanned inpatient admissions

67% reduction in number of people who had unplanned inpatient admissions

50% reduction in total days of unplanned inpatient admissions

"Often the clients that find their way to CHOPS are quite disengaged from their families and some of the work that the clinicians are doing with clients we've got at the moment is actually trying to reunify people with their families and trying to even find their families"

- Service staff