Initial Assessment and Referral Decision Support Tool (IAR-DST) for mental healthcare

A nationally consistent and evidence-based approach to mental health referral

People present with mental health concerns related to a range of issues in their life. The IAR-DST will help you assess across clinical and psychosocial domains and determine a level of need, which in addition to your existing assessment of diagnosis and severity of illness, can ensure the right service at the right time.

The IAR-DST can help you:

- Explore essential information during a mental health assessment and review critical information that is essential for decision making.
- Estimate or confirm the mental health treatment needs of the patient.
- Communicate treatment needs with others in the sector, reducing the frustration that might occur when referring to mental health services.
- Document the need of the patient across eight assessment domains, reducing medico-legal risks associated with difficulty documenting decision-making in mental healthcare.

IAR-DST training

For an introduction and orientation to stepped care, the initial assessment and referral process, and the decision support tool, please register for virtual training.
Training can also be delivered face-to-face training at your facility.

[Register for training here](#)

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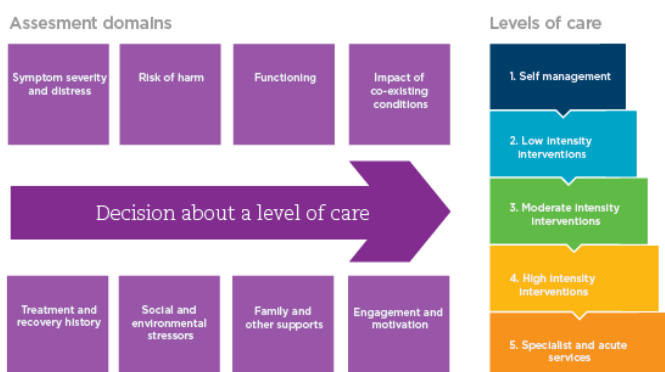
**GPs & GP Registrars may be eligible for 2 CPD points 2023 (30 minutes Reviewing Performance and 1.5 hrs Educational Activities through RACGP;2 hours CPD for ACCRM) and $300 reimbursement
** Eligibility guidelines apply – See NQPHN website

Assessment domains | Levels of care

| Symptom severity and distress | Risk of harm | Functioning | Impact of co-existing conditions |

Decision about a level of care

| Treatment and recovery history | Social and environmental stressors | Family and other supports | Engagement and motivation |

1. Self management
2. Low intensity interventions
3. Moderate intensity interventions
4. High intensity interventions
5. Specialist and acute services

ACRRM CPD ACCREDITED ACTIVITY 2023-2025

RACGP CPD Approved Activity

Educational Activities	Measuring Outcomes	Reviewing Performance
1.5 hours	00 hours	0.5 hours

For more information contact:
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A nationally consistent and evidence-based approach to mental health referrals

What is the IAR-DST?

- The Australian Government, through the Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Plan, is expanding and implementing the Initial Assessment and Referral (IAR) tool in primary care. The IAR Decision Support Tool (IAR-DST) is a decision-making framework guided by practitioner assessment and clinical judgement.

- The IAR-DST is used to estimate or confirm the mental health response a person requires, and in doing so, aims to achieve the least burdensome intervention that is most likely to lead to the most significant clinical gain.

- The IAR-DST and IAR Guidance is being implemented nationwide and sector wide, throughout Commonwealth-funded mental health services and beyond.

- With widespread use of IAR-DST, we can create an environment with a shared framework and consistent language to communicate about mental health service needs.

- As the IAR-DST becomes widely used, people will be directed to the most appropriate service, allowing capacity to be freed up and waiting times to be reduced.

How does the IAR-DST work?

The IAR-DST assessment is undertaken, in consultation with clients, using eight initial assessment domains (primary domains and contextual domains) that are used to match clients to one of five appropriate levels of care.

These eight domains help to distil essential assessment information and identify key signals (i.e. red flags) that are critical for decision making. Assessment across clinical and psychosocial domains provides clarity on the most appropriate intervention and level of care required to support a person, at the right time.

Learn more

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An Australian Government Initiative

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