



Alcohol and Other Drugs Management Policy

1. Purpose

This policy sets out the principles for the effective support of consumers who are experiencing intoxication with, withdrawal from, and dependence on alcohol, psycho stimulants, benzodiazepines, opioids, volatile substances, and cannabis (alcohol and other drugs), including the misuse of prescribed medications.

This policy supports the aim of the [National Framework for Alcohol, Tobacco and Other Drug Treatment 2019–29](#) (the National Framework) to ensure that “all Australians seeking alcohol, tobacco and other drug treatment are able to access high quality treatment appropriate to their needs, when and where they need it”.¹

This policy should be read in conjunction with the:

- WACHS [Patient Assessment and Management in the Emergency Department Policy](#)
- WACHS [Triage Procedure](#)
- WACHS [Restraint Minimisation Policy](#).

For specialty-specific information relating to women and newborns services, advice should be sought from the Women and Newborns Service with reference to:

- [Maternity and Newborn Care Resources - EUCP Policy](#)

For guidance on the management of intoxication with, withdrawal from, and dependence on tobacco and nicotine related substances refer to the:

- WACHS [Smoke Free Policy](#)
- [Employee application for Nicotine Replacement Therapy Form](#)
- [MR202E.1 WACHS Nicotine Screening and Withdrawal Plan](#).

For the management of employees who may be affected by alcohol or other drugs while attending any WACHS site in their capacity as an employee, refer to MP 0124/09 [Code of Conduct Policy](#) and WACHS [Fitness for Work Policy](#).

2. Policy

2.1 Care principles

Care provided to consumers affected by alcohol and other drugs is to comply with:

- MP 0062/17 [Alcohol and Other Drug Withdrawal Management Policy](#)
- MP 0181/24 [Safety Planning for Mental Health Consumers Policy](#)
- [Charter of Mental Health Care Principles](#) and
- the six treatment principles articulated in the [National Framework](#).

All care is to be informed by harm minimisation principles and delivered in a manner that is:

¹ Commonwealth Department of Health and Aged Care, National Framework for Alcohol, Tobacco and Other Drug Treatment 2019–29, December 2019, p.4.

- person-centred
- equitable and accessible
- evidence-informed
- culturally responsive and culturally competent
- holistic and coordinated
- non-judgmental, non-stigmatising, non-discriminatory
- recovery-oriented
- trauma-informed, and
- developmentally appropriate.

Carers, family members, support persons, and other significant persons are to be supported and encouraged to participate in the consumer's care and recovery.

All consumers, carers, and staff members who need assistance to ensure effective communication with standard English are to have access to appropriate interpreting and translating assistance (refer to MP 0051/17 [Language Service Policy](#)).

Where the consumer identifies as Aboriginal, access to an Aboriginal Health Worker, Aboriginal Health Liaison Officer, or Aboriginal Mental Health Worker must be offered where available to ensure culturally safe and appropriate care.

2.2 Alcohol and other drug management resources

Acknowledging the complexity of caring for consumers in this field of practice, WACHS mandates the use of the following resources to guide care:

- [A brief guide to the management of alcohol and other drug withdrawal \(mhc.wa.gov.au\)](#)
- [Alcohol and Other Drugs Withdrawal Management Practice and Pathways](#)
- [Alcohol and Other Drugs Early Intervention: Practice and Pathways](#)
- [Alcohol and Drug Withdrawal Guidelines](#)
- [About Volatile Substance Use \(mhc.wa.gov.au\)](#)
- [Nitrous oxide \(mhc.wa.gov.au\)](#)
- [Therapeutic Guidelines \(eTG\)](#).

Subject to full documentation of the care provided in the consumer's healthcare record, clinicians are supported to use the following, and other, evidence-based best practice guidelines as appropriate to individual circumstances, clinical judgement, scope of professional practice, consumer choice, and the health care setting:

- [Alcohol and Drug Withdrawal Clinical Practice Guidelines \(health.qld.gov.au\)](#)
- [Clinical toolkit: Alcohol and other drugs | headspace](#)
- [Guidelines for the Treatment of Alcohol Problems \(alcoholtreatmentguidelines.com.au\)](#)
- [Management of Withdrawal from Alcohol and Other Drugs - Handbook \(nsw.gov.au\)](#)
- [Quick Reference Guide to the Treatment of Alcohol Problems | Australian Government Department of Health and Aged Care](#)
- [Clinical Guidance for the Management of Substance Use in Pregnancy, Birth and the Postnatal Period - Resources \(nsw.gov.au\)](#).

2.3 Prohibited items at WACHS sites

In accordance with the [Health Services \(Conduct and Traffic\) Regulations 2016](#) (WA) a person must not bring any prohibited item onto WACHS property unless the person has

permission to do so. Prohibited items include alcoholic beverages and prohibited drugs as defined under Section 3 of the [Misuse of Drugs Act 1981](#) (WA).

Specific restrictions apply within Mental Health Inpatient Units – refer to the [Mental Health Search and Seizure Procedure](#).

An exemption applies for Aged Care residents – refer to local arrangements.

Consumers are to be informed that the use of alcohol or other drugs in health care settings is not permitted. If there is reasonable concern that a consumer has taken alcohol or other drugs, the consumer can be requested to submit to a breath, urine, or blood test, however, consent must be obtained.

For further information on responding to the presence of prohibited items refer to local security and consumer property arrangements.

2.4 Screening and assessment

The screening, assessment, and reassessment, of the consumer in respect of drug and alcohol use may occur at any point in the consumer journey (triage, admission, referral, observations) and will be dependent on factors such as:

- clinical presentation including state of intoxication or withdrawal
- healthcare setting
- clinical expertise and scope of practice
- availability and appropriateness of referral options
- safety considerations for staff, consumers, and family members including children.

Clinicians are to be guided by the [Alcohol and Other Drugs Early Intervention: Practice and Pathways](#) and the [Screening and withdrawal management toolkit](#). These provide tools to support brief intervention as well as consumer education resources including:

- ASSIST-Lite (alcohol and drug screening)
- AUDIT-C (alcohol screening)
- DAST-10 (drug screening)
- DUDIT.

Documentation of the consumer's use of alcohol and other drugs is to be completed using the:

- [MR111 WACHS Nursing Admission, Screening and Assessment Tool - Adults](#)
- [MR8B West Australian Handheld Pregnancy Record](#)
- [Mental Health Risk Assessment and Management Plan](#)
- [Adult Mental Health Assessment Form](#).

The MR202E Alcohol & Tobacco Screening Tool (refer to relevant local versions) is to be utilised to document a consumer's alcohol use and to support clinical decision-making regarding intervention, treatment planning, brief intervention, and referral pathways.

This tool is recommended for consumers aged 16 years and over, where their clinical condition permits its use. It is not intended for use with individuals who are seriously ill, currently intoxicated, or receiving palliative care.

2.5 Brief Intervention

Whenever possible, brief interventions are to be undertaken consistent with the early intervention pathways set out in the [Alcohol and Other Drugs Early Intervention: Practice and Pathways](#), as relevant to the clinical context:

- Path 1.1 - Emergency Department Presentation
- Path 1.2a - Outpatient Clinical Appointment
- Path 1.2b - Community Mental Health Service Attendance
- Path 1.3 - Inpatient Admission.

Specific requirements for mental health consumers

For mental health consumers, consistent with the [Triage to Discharge Statewide Standardised Clinical Documentation \(SSCD\) Guidelines](#), the following documentation must be completed:

- [Mental Health Triage](#)
- [Risk Assessment and Management Plan \(RAMP\)](#)
- [Adult Mental Health Assessment](#)
- [Adult Mental Health Physical Examination](#)

The [Alcohol, Smoking and Substance Involvement Screening Tool](#) (ASSIST) is to be used in Mental Health Inpatient Units as indicated in the [Adult Mental Health Assessment form](#).

The mandatory mental health [Treatment, Support and Discharge Plan](#) is used to document the consumer's treatment plan related to alcohol and other drugs.

Where the consumer is transferred or discharged to primary or specialist services for alcohol and other drugs follow up treatment, this information is to be included in the [Mental Health Care Transfer Summary](#).

For children and adolescent mental health consumers the following must be used:

- [Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service \(CAMHS\) Risk Assessment and Management Plan](#)
- [CAMHS Initial Assessment](#)
- [CAMHS Physical Examination](#)

2.6 Treatment and management of intoxication and withdrawal

The [Alcohol and Other Drugs Withdrawal Management Practice and Pathways](#) describes the signs and symptoms of intoxication and withdrawal. It provides detailed pathways for the management of withdrawal according to clinical presentation as well as quick reference guides for supportive care, monitoring, and pharmacological treatment regimens in respect of:

- alcohol
- opioids
- cannabis
- benzodiazepines, and
- amphetamine type substances.

A withdrawal management plan must be developed as clinically appropriate. Consistent with the [Alcohol and Other Drugs Withdrawal Management Practice and Pathways](#), the following documentation is to be completed:

- Clinical Institute Withdrawal Assessment of Alcohol Scale (CIWA-Ar) (Refer to [Alcohol and Other Drugs Withdrawal Management Practice and Pathways Appendix 1.1](#))
- [Clinical Opiate Withdrawal Scale Chart \(COWS\)](#)
- Stimulant Withdrawal Scale ([Alcohol and Other Drugs Withdrawal Management Practice and Pathways](#) – Appendix 1.2)
- Clinical Institute Withdrawal Assessment Scale – Benzodiazepines (CIWA-B) Scale (Refer to [Alcohol and Other Drugs Withdrawal Management Practice and Pathways Appendix 1.3](#))
- Cannabis Withdrawal Scale ([Alcohol and Other Drugs Withdrawal Management Practice and Pathways Appendix 1.4](#)).

Where required, the Alcohol Withdrawal Plan is to be noted via the [MR120 WACHS Adult Nursing Care Plan “My Care Plan”](#) or the Mental Health [Treatment, Support and Discharge Plan \(SMHMR907\)](#).

2.7 Referral

A referral to a specialist clinician must be made as clinically appropriate. Where it is not possible to directly provide care, consumers must be referred to another appropriate clinical setting or community service. Should the consumer decline the referral, this is to be noted in their healthcare record.

The MR202E Alcohol & Tobacco Screening Tool is to be used to guide the referral actions. Further referral options include:

- WACHS Drug and Alcohol Services (where available)
- Externally operated Alcohol and Drug Services
- AOD Specialist Clinicians
- General Practitioner
- Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services
- Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service
- Women and Newborn Health Service.

A record of the referral made for the consumer is to be documented in the consumer’s healthcare record and, where relevant, in the [MR29 WACHS Referral Record and Leaving Hospital Checklist - Adults](#) or the [Mental Health Care Transfer Summary \(SMHMR916\)](#).

For additional information relating to referral options refer to:

- [Alcohol and Other Drugs Early Intervention: Practice and Pathways](#).
- [Alcohol and Other Drugs: Partnerships and Pathways](#).
- [Contacts-for-AOD-Assessment-Treatment-and-Support](#)
- [The Green Book | A Directory of alcohol and other drug \(AOD\) services in Western Australia \(wanada.org.au\)](#)

2.8 Resources for Consumers

Consumers are to be supported in accessing resources that address their specific/individual needs related to alcohol and drug use. A list of recommended resources is provided at [Appendix A – Resources for Consumers](#).

2.9 Discharge and transfer of care

In addition to the requirements of the [Mental Health Care Transfer Summary \(SMHMR916\)](#) and [Treatment, Support and Discharge Plan](#), the consumer is to be provided with the following as relevant:

- health advice and what to do in an emergency
- local contact numbers and referral information to community AOD services
- [Assist-Lite Feedback](#), [AUDIT-C](#), [DAST-10](#) pamphlets
- access to the [ACE](#) or ASSIST-Lite app.

Where a consumer initiates their discharge earlier than planned, the following are to be followed:

- [Discharge against Medical Advice Policy](#) and
- [Management and Review of 'Did Not Wait' Patients that Present to Emergency Services Policy](#).

2.10 Reporting

The [Medicines and Poisons Act 2014](#) (WA) requires an authorised health professional to make a report to the Department of Health, within 48 hours, when they have reason to believe a person is:

- Oversupplied - that a person has over a period obtained, or obtained prescriptions for, quantities of drugs of addiction that are greater than is reasonably necessary for therapeutic use. These persons are commonly referred to as 'doctor shoppers'.
- Drug Dependent - that a person has acquired, because of repeated administration of drugs of addiction or Schedule 9 poisons, an overpowering desire for the continued administration of a drug of addiction or a Schedule 9 poison.

For this part of the [Medicines and Poisons Act 2014](#) (WA), a 'drug of addiction' means all medicines in Schedule 8 as well as Schedule 4 Monitored Medicines (called Schedule 4 Reportable Poisons). These are the medicines monitored by ScriptCheckWA, Western Australia's real time prescription monitoring system.

Clinicians are to follow the:

- [Reporting: Drug Dependent and Oversupplied](#)
- [Guidance note: Reporting drug dependent and oversupplied persons](#)
- [Reporting a Drug Dependent Person form](#)
- [Reporting an oversupplied person form](#)

An [information leaflet](#) is available for consumers.

2.11 Training and support

Specialist support service

The [Drug and Alcohol Clinical Advisory Service](#) (DACAS) is a specialist telephone consultancy service that provides clinical advice to health professionals on all issues relating to management of alcohol and other drug use by consumers. The service is provided by addiction medicine specialists and is available at no charge to all health professionals in Western Australia.

Training resources

The Mental Health Commission (MHC) provides a [range of training](#) focusing on alcohol and other drug-related issues. The training is delivered through face-to-face, workshops, webinars and online learning.

The following resources are also available:

- [CIWA-Ar Toolbox Education](#)
- [COWS Toolbox Education](#)

For all employees [MyLearning](#) provides:

- Introduction to Alcohol and Other Drugs Declaration Package (MHAOD EL2) – this consists of three modules and is recommended for all mental health staff.

For midwives [MyLearning](#) provides:

- Midwifery: Alcohol in Pregnancy and Breastfeeding Declaration (MW18 EL2).

3. Roles and Responsibilities

Regional Directors are responsible for ensuring policy implementation across their region including the allocation of resources to support this policy.

Managers and senior staff are responsible for:

- monitoring compliance with this policy
- ensuring staff have access to training on alcohol and other drug treatment as relevant to their role
- investigating clinical incidents where alcohol and other drug related matters are a causal factor.

Clinicians are responsible for:

- providing and documenting consumer care consistent with this policy
- screening, assessing, and reassessing consumers for alcohol and other drugs concerns
- completing mandatory reporting for drug dependent persons
- following the mandated resources and referral pathways
- referring consumers to specialist support services
- supporting consumers to access alcohol and other drugs health information
- ensuring discharge plans detail ongoing support for consumers affected by alcohol and other drugs, and
- completing appropriate alcohol and other drugs training including that available via [MyLearning](#) and the Mental Health Commission.

All staff are required to comply with the directions in WACHS policies and procedures in line with their roles and responsibilities. If staff are unsure which policies procedures and guidelines apply to their role or scope of practice, or are unsure of the application of directions, they should consult their manager in the first instance.

4. Monitoring and Evaluation

The following information will be used to monitor implementation of this policy:

- audit of the consumer healthcare record
- reported clinical incident data
- carer, consumer and staff feedback.

This policy is to be evaluated to determine effectiveness, relevance and currency within three years from publication.

5. References

Commonwealth Department of Health. National Drug Strategy 2017–2026. Canberra: Australian Government; 2017.

Commonwealth Department of Health and Aged Care. National Framework for Alcohol, Tobacco and Other Drug Treatment 2019–2029. Canberra: Australian Government; 2019.

Department of Health Western Australia. Alcohol and Other Drugs: Partnerships and Pathways. Version 1. Perth: Government of Western Australia; 2021.

Department of Health Western Australia. Alcohol and Other Drugs Early Intervention: Practice and Pathways. Version 1. Perth: Government of Western Australia; 2021.

Department of Health Western Australia. Alcohol and Other Drugs Withdrawal Management: Practice and Pathways. Version 2. Perth: Government of Western Australia; 2021.

Department of Health Western Australia. Contacts for AOD Assessment, Treatment and Support. Perth: Government of Western Australia; 2021.

Mental Health Commission. Western Australian Alcohol and Drug Interagency Strategy 2018–2022. Perth: Government of Western Australia; 2018.

Mental Health Commission. Western Australian Mental Health, Alcohol and Other Drug Services Plan 2015–2025 (Plan) Update 2018. Perth: Government of Western Australia; 2019.

6. Definitions

Term	Definition
Aboriginal	Within Western Australia, the term Aboriginal is used in preference to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, in recognition that Aboriginal people are the original inhabitants of Western Australia. No disrespect is

	intended to our Torres Strait Islander colleagues and community.
Prohibited item	A prohibited item is any item described in Section 7 of the Health Services (Conduct and Traffic) Regulations 2016 (WA) and includes alcoholic beverages, firearms, and controlled weapons.

7. Document Summary

Coverage	WACHS-wide
Audience	Clinicians
Records Management	Corporate Recordkeeping Compliance Policy Health Record Management Policy
Related Legislation	Health Services (Conduct and Traffic) Regulations 2016 (WA) Health Services Act 2016 (WA) Medicines and Poisons Act 2014 (WA) Mental Health Act 2014 (WA) Misuse of Drugs Act 1981 (WA)
Related Mandatory Policies / Frameworks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MP 0062/17 Alcohol and Other Drug Withdrawal Management Policy • MP 0095/18 Clinical Handover Policy • MP 014/19 Code of Conduct Policy • MP 0051/17 Language Service Policy • MP 0181/24 Safety Planning for Mental Health Consumers Policy • MP 0158/21 Smoke Free Policy • MP 0186/24 Use of Restrictive Practices in Non-Authorised Healthcare Settings Policy
Related WACHS Policy Documents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discharge Against Medical Advice Policy • Fitness for Work Policy • Management and Review of 'Did Not Wait' Patients that Present to Emergency Services Policy • Maternity and Newborn Care Resources - EUCP Policy • Mental Health Search and Seizure Procedure • Patient Assessment and Management in the Emergency Department Policy • Recognising the Importance of Carers Policy • Restraint Minimisation Policy • Smoke Free Policy • Triage Procedure
Other Related Documents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A brief guide to the management of alcohol and other drug withdrawal (mhc.wa.gov.au) • Alcohol and Drug Withdrawal Clinical Practice Guidelines (health.qld.gov.au) • Alcohol and Drug Withdrawal Guidelines

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alcohol and Other Drugs Withdrawal Management Practice and Pathways • Alcohol and Other Drugs Early Intervention: Practice and Pathways • Charter of Mental Health Care Principles • Clinical Guidance for the Management of Substance Use in Pregnancy, Birth and the Postnatal Period - Resources (nsw.gov.au). • Clinical toolkit: Alcohol and other drugs headspace • Guidelines for the Treatment of Alcohol Problems (alcoholtreatmentguidelines.com.au) • Management of Withdrawal from Alcohol and Other Drugs - Handbook (nsw.gov.au) • National Framework for Alcohol, Tobacco and Other Drug Treatment 2019–29 • Quick Reference Guide to the Treatment of Alcohol Problems Australian Government Department of Health and Aged Care • Screening and withdrawal management toolkit
Related Forms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employee Application for Nicotine Replacement Therapy Form • MR8B West Australian Handheld Pregnancy Record • MR29 WACHS Referral Record and Leaving Hospital Checklist - Adults • MR120 WACHS Adult Nursing Care Plan • MR111 WACHS Nursing Admission, Screening and Assessment Tool - Adults • MR202E.1 WACHS Nicotine Screening and Withdrawal Plan • MR202E Alcohol & Tobacco Screening Tool (refer to local versions) • WACHS Alcohol withdrawal chart (in development)
Related Training	<p>Available from MyLearning:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alcohol in Pregnancy and Breastfeeding Declaration (MW18 EL2) • Introduction to Alcohol and Other Drugs Declaration Package (MHAOD EL2)
Aboriginal Health Impact Statement Declaration (ISD)	ISD Record ID: 4507
National Safety and Quality Health Service (NSQHS) Standards	5.03, 5.10, 5.14
Aged Care Quality Standards	3
Chief Psychiatrist's Standards for Clinical Care	"Assessment" Criterion 14.
Other Standards (please specify and include link)	Nil

8. Document Control

Version	Published date	Current from	Summary of changes
2.00	25 November 2025	25 November 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> policy title updated and reclassified from clinical practice standard to policy. policy owner updated to align with current organisation structure. content contemporised to ensure relevance in line with MP 0062/17 Alcohol and Other Drug Withdrawal Management Policy for consumer care. <p>This version of the policy supersedes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Alcohol and Tobacco Brief Intervention Policy Administration of the Alcohol and Tobacco Screening Tool and Brief Intervention Procedure Administration of Alcohol Brief Intervention Flowchart Use of Alcohol and Illicit Substances Procedure - Broome Mental Health Unit
2.01	20 February 2026	25 November 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Minor administrative amendment

9. Approval

Policy Owner	Executive Director Mental Health
Co-approver	Executive Director Clinical Excellence Executive Director Nursing and Midwifery Services
Contact	Program Officer, Mental Health Directorate
Business Unit	Mental Health Directorate
EDRMS #	ED-CO-15-91358

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This document can be made available in alternative formats on request.

Appendix A: Resources for Consumers

General information

- [Alcohol | Australian Government Department of Health and Aged Care](#)
- [How alcohol affects your health | healthdirect](#)
- [Drugs | Australian Government Department of Health and Aged Care](#)
- [Alcohol and Drug Information and Support Services \(ADIS\) - Alcohol and Drug Information and Support Services \(ADIS\) - Organisations - Alcohol and Other Drugs Knowledge Centre \(ecu.edu.au\)](#)
- [Alcohol and Drug Support Line \(mhc.wa.gov.au\)](#)
- [Get alcohol and drug support | Western Australian Government \(www.wa.gov.au\)](#)
- [Community alcohol and drug services | Mental Health Commission \(mhc.wa.gov.au\)](#)
- [Perth Aboriginal services – drug and alcohol services \(healthywa.wa.gov.au\)](#)

Alcohol specific consumer information:

- [ASSIST – Lite Feedback Pamphlet](#)
- [ASSIST – Lite poster](#)
- [ASSIST – Lite Clinical Form Toolbox Education](#)
- [ASSIST – Lite Feedback Pamphlet Toolbox Education](#)
- [ASSIST – Lite Take5 Education](#)

Drug Abuse Screening Test Pamphlet:

- [DAST-10 Pamphlet](#)

Drug and Alcohol use:

- [9 Stages of Change Pamphlet](#)

Reporting Drug Dependent Persons

- [Patient information leaflet](#)