

***Access to Allied Psychological Services Projects
Engagement of provisional/intern psychologists***

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The Department supports the use of provisional/intern psychologists in the delivery of Access to Allied Psychological Services (ATAPS) and recognises the important role provisional/intern psychologists play in providing services where it is sometimes difficult to attract workforce.

The current ATAPS guidelines state ‘To ensure a high quality standard of service delivery, allied health professionals who are to deliver services under the Program should be:

- adequately experienced in the field of mental health, or (to allow for entry of newly trained persons into the field of mental health) under the approved and direct professional supervision of a fully qualified and registered professional expert in that field who meet the ATAPS criteria.’ (ATAPS Guidelines pp4 (iii) *Allied Health professionals: probationary, student and intern providers*)

The Department recently asked the Development and Liaison Officers in each of the State Based Organisations to provide details of how Divisions of General Practice were engaging provisional/intern psychologists. The information provided indicated that a number of Divisions are using provisional/intern psychologists to meet workforce shortages, all of whom have been engaged in accordance with the current guidelines.

This circular aims to clarify concerns raised by Divisions of General Practice about the engagement of provisional/intern psychological to deliver ATAPS.

As noted on the Australian Psychological Society (APS) website “*To work as a psychologist in Australia you are legally required to be registered, in the same way medical practitioners and solicitors must register to practise. Being a member of the APS is not the same as being registered. Registration is the province of the State and Territory Psychologists Registration Boards. Each Board determines the requirements for registration in that State or Territory. These requirements differ slightly, but all require the completion of four full-time years of academic study in psychology plus two additional full-time years of either postgraduate training in psychology or supervised workplace experience as a probationary/conditional registered psychologist.*”

The Divisions of General Practice should refer to their State or Territory Registration Board to ensure that both the provisional/intern psychologists engaged to deliver ATAPS and the supervising psychologists meet the necessary requirements. Contact details for State and Territory Registration Boards can be found on the APS website at www.psychology.org.au.

Divisions of General Practice should also ensure that they are meeting the requirement of their current Funding Agreements, specifically in relation to Item J Insurance, where it is noted that Divisions of General Practice are responsible for seeking independent professional advice on the appropriate levels of insurance which allied health professional are required to have prior to delivering focussed psychological strategies under ATAPS. The full clause from current ATAPS funding agreements is quoted below for your reference:

J. INSURANCE (clause 16)

The Participant must take out and maintain:

- (a) Workers' compensation in accordance with relevant State or Territory legislation;
- (b) Public liability insurance in an amount of not less than \$10 million (\$10,000,000);
- (c) Professional indemnity insurance in an amount of not less than
 - \$5 million (\$5,000,000) for non-clinical work
 - \$2 million (\$2,000,000) for clinical work by non-medical practitioners
- (d) Vicarious liability cover in an amount of not less than \$1 million where the Participant is funding medical practitioners who are carrying out medical procedures or providing medical advice.

If the Participant wishes to obtain a lower amount of professional indemnity insurance during the Agreement Period it must put its case to the Department with written supporting documentation including a risk assessment and insurance cover recommendation from an appropriately qualified assessor. It should also include a risk minimisation Program in documentation provided to the Department.

It is the Participant's responsibility to seek independent professional advice on the appropriate levels of insurance which allied health professionals are required to have prior to delivering focussed psychological strategies under the Project.

Please note divisions of General practice must also ensure that provisional/intern Psychologists engaged to deliver ATAPS have the appropriate levels of insurance which allied health professionals are required to have prior to delivering focussed psychological strategies under ATAPS.

The Department continues to support the engagement of intern/provisionally registered psychologists, in accordance with the guidelines, for the delivery of ATAPS. Supervisors for intern/provisionally registered psychologists may be funded from the ATAPS service delivery component.

The major exception to the above is where a Division is delivering an Additional Support for Patients at Risk of Suicide and Self Harm demonstration project – in these cases the use of student interns is not permitted (Guidelines for the ATAPS Additional Support for Patients at Risk of Suicide and Self Harm Demonstration Project pp5, 4.1 *Allied Health Professionals eligible to deliver services under the project*)

If you have any further queries about the engagement of provisional/intern psychologists please ring Kerry Byrne on (02) 6289 8822 or alternatively email kerry.byrne@health.gov.au.