

National Safety and Quality Health Service Standards Second edition

OVERVIEW

Aim

The National Safety and Quality Health Service (NSQHS) Standards were developed by the Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care with the Australian Government, state and territory partners, consumers and the private sector. The primary aim of the NSQHS Standards is to protect the public from harm and improve the quality of health care. They describe the level of care that should be provided by health service organisations and the systems that are needed to deliver such care.

Background

The first edition of the NSQHS Standards, which was released in 2011, has been used to assess health service organisations since January 2013. Using the NSQHS Standards, health service organisations have put in place safety and quality systems that have improved patient safety. For example, the rates of healthcare-associated infections have decreased, in-hospital cardiac arrests have decreased, adverse drug reactions and medication histories are better documented and less antibiotics are prescribed due to improvements in antibiotic stewardship.

Second edition

The second edition of the NSQHS Standards were released in November 2017, and health service organisations will be assessed against the new standards from January 2019. Health service organisations will be informed of the transition arrangements for accreditation well in advance of implementation.

The second edition was developed by the Commission in consultation with a wide range of stakeholders, including the Australian Government, state and territory partners, health service organisations, consumers, peak bodies and interest groups.

The second edition of the NSQHS Standards addresses gaps identified in the first edition, including mental health and cognitive impairment, health literacy, end-of-life care, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health. It also updates the evidence for actions, consolidates and streamlines standards and actions to make them clearer and easier to implement, and reduces duplication.

There are eight standards and 148 actions, while the first edition had 10 standards and 256 actions. All the elements in the second edition must be implemented by health service organisations.

The NSQHS Standards

Safe and high-quality care requires the vigilance and cooperation of the whole healthcare workforce. It is based on a risk mitigation approach that focuses on implementing the NSQHS Standards as routine practice and identifies healthcare staff responsible for specific actions.

The second edition of the NSQHS Standards comprises eight standards.

Clinical Governance and Partnering with Consumers Standards combine to form the clinical governance framework for all health service organisations. They support and integrate with all the clinical standards, which cover specific areas of patient care. The eight are:

-  **1. Clinical Governance**, which aims to ensure that there are systems in place within health service organisations to maintain and improve the reliability, safety and quality of health care.
-  **2. Partnering with Consumers**, which aims to ensure that consumers are partners in the design, delivery and evaluation of healthcare systems and services, and that patients are given the opportunity to be partners in their own care.
-  **3. Preventing and Controlling Healthcare-Associated Infection**, which aims to reduce the risk of patients getting preventable healthcare-associated infections, manage infections effectively if they occur, and limit the development of antimicrobial resistance through the appropriate prescribing and use of antimicrobials.
-  **4. Medication Safety**, which aims to ensure that clinicians safely prescribe, dispense and administer appropriate medicines, and monitor medicine use. It also aims to ensure that consumers are informed about medicines, and understand their own medicine needs and risks.
-  **5. Comprehensive Care**, which aims to ensure that patients receive comprehensive health care that meets their individual needs, and that considers the impact of their health issues on their life and wellbeing. It also aims to ensure that risks to patients during health care are prevented and managed through targeted strategies.
-  **6. Communicating for Safety**, which aims to ensure that there is effective communication between patients, carers and families, multi-disciplinary teams and clinicians, and across the health service organisation, to support continuous, coordinated and safe care for patients.
-  **7. Blood Management**, which aims to ensure that patients' own blood is safely and appropriately managed, and that any blood and blood products that patients receive are safe and appropriate.
-  **8. Recognising and Responding to Acute Deterioration**, which aims to ensure that acute deterioration in a patient's physical, mental or cognitive condition is recognised promptly and appropriate action is taken.

Further information

A full copy of the NSQHS Standards (second edition) is available on the Commission's website at www.safetyandquality.gov.au.

The Advice Centre provides support on implementing the NSQHS Standards for health service organisations, surveyors and accrediting agencies.

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