

INFORMATION
for consumers
and carers

Introduction to the NSQDMH Standards

Digital mental health services have grown in popularity in the past decade, and offer new and innovative ways for consumers, carers and families to access care. Evidence shows that digital technology can play an important role in delivering services.

Digital services can benefit you in many ways. You might live in a remote or regional area, or you might not have time to attend in-person appointments. You might want to use other types of services along with the care you receive in-person from your treating practitioner, remain completely anonymous when discussing your mental health, or have more control over your own health care. Digital mental health services can help in many of these situations.

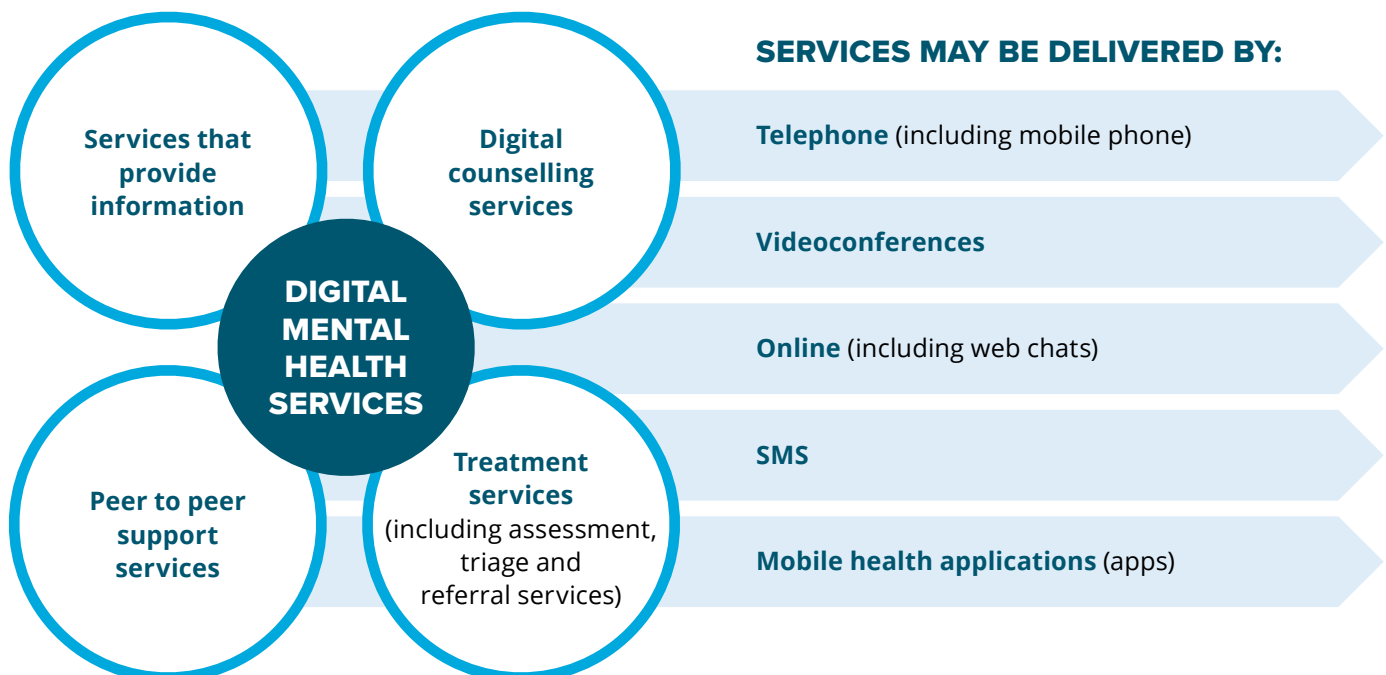
The quality of available services varies. This is why the Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care (the Commission) collaborated with service users, consumers, carers, families, clinicians, service providers and technical experts to develop the National Safety and Quality Digital Mental Health (NSQDMH) Standards.

The NSQDMH Standards describe the level of care that you should expect to receive from a digital mental health service. They aim to improve the quality of digital mental health services and to protect people who use these services from harm.

What is a digital mental health service?

For the NSQDMH Standards, a digital mental health service is defined as a mental health, suicide prevention or alcohol and other drug service that uses technology to facilitate engagement and deliver care.

Although mental health, suicide prevention, and alcohol and other drug services are recognised as separate specialist sectors that provide services to often distinct groups, the NSQDMH Standards refer to these digital services collectively as 'digital mental health services'.





What can I expect from a digital mental health service?

The NSQDMH Standards require service providers of digital mental health services to review their systems to ensure you are receiving safe and high-quality care from them. Providers include non-government, public or private organisations, or individuals who make a digital mental health service available for others to use.

Service providers should review all their systems, including clinical and technical systems, to make sure:

- Your privacy is protected
- You know the types of data that will be collected and who has access to the data
- You consent before your data is used for any purpose other than for your direct care
- Your service uses technologies that are stable and secure.

Digital mental health services should be based on the best available evidence and best practice. The services should aim to minimise harm to you and others. You should be able to easily find information about any digital mental health service you may wish to use.

The NSQDMH Standards promote partnering with service users (and, if relevant, their support people) in all aspects of digital mental health care. This means service users, consumers, carers, families and support people are involved in:

- Planning and decisions about their own care
- Governance and design of digital mental health services.

How can the NSQDMH Standards improve care?

The NSQDMH Standards clearly describe your role – and that of your support people – in your own care. They recognise that involving you, your carers and family leads to a more positive experience for you, as well as better and safer health care.

This means service providers using the NSQDMH Standards should help you – or the person you care for – to fully understand the health and treatment options that their digital mental health services offer. Service providers should allow you to ask questions and make decisions about your care, so that the care you receive is right for you.

How do I choose a digital mental health service?

Service providers using the NSQDMH Standards should have systems and processes in place to meet the expected standard of care. Some providers may take longer than others to work towards implementing the Standards.

The NSQDMH Standards are voluntary, but you can ask your service provider whether they are using these Standards to improve their delivery of care.

Service providers can use the Commission's self-assessment tool to see how they are tracking against the NSQDMH Standards. The Commission has also developed an accreditation model for digital mental health services which will operate under the Australian Health Service Safety and Quality Accreditation (AHSSQA) Scheme. Assessments under the Scheme will commence in November 2022.

Service providers must not declare that they meet the NSQDMH Standards until they have successfully completed an accreditation assessment.

The Commission has developed a fact sheet to help you know what to look for when choosing a digital mental health service. If you know what to look for, you will be able to choose the service most likely to meet your needs.

The fact sheet is available at www.safetyandquality.gov.au/dmhs.

Find out more

The complete NSQDMH Standards, including the 59 actions, and associated fact sheets and other materials are at www.safetyandquality.gov.au/dmhs.

You can contact the project team for more information at dmhs@safetyandquality.gov.au.