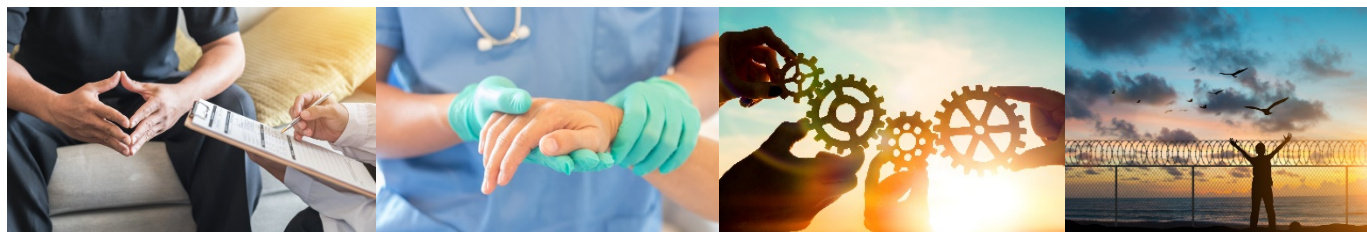


Information sheet for Department of Health staff



Why create an Office for Prisoner Health and Wellbeing (OPHW)?

The Offender Health Services Review found that many system-wide challenges such as overcrowding, insufficient clinic space and differences in operational requirements between Queensland Corrective Services and the Department of Health were not being adequately addressed. It recommended that the Department of Health establish a state-wide program coordination unit to oversee offender health services and to collaborate with Queensland Corrective Services.

What will the OPHW do?

The OPHW will provide statewide leadership and a coordination point for Queensland Health provided services for people in prison.

It will facilitate the development and coordination of statewide policies, plans, funding proposals, information management systems, and will participate in quality, research and service re-design activities.

The OPHW will also provide an escalation point for issues unresolved issues at the local level, will work to resolve system wide challenges and will build consistency across the health service system for people in prison. The Office and will also lead the implementation of recommendations from the Offender Health Services Review.

How will it do this?

It will identify and implement solutions in collaboration with key stakeholders including: Hospital and Health Service (HHS) Offender Health Service staff and executives, other government agencies, specifically Queensland Corrective Services (QCS), consumer and industrial organisations, and other business units in the Department of Health such as the Mental Health, Alcohol and other Drugs Branch, the Office of the Chief Dental Officer and the Health Purchasing and System Performance Division.

What is the objective of the OPHW?

To enable Queensland Health staff to provide the best possible health care for people in prison. In doing so it seeks to assist people in prison to experience the best health possible, improve their wellbeing and future life prospects. By improving the health of people whilst in prison it will contribute to improving the health of the wider community upon release.

What does the creation of the OPHW mean for:

Department of Health staff?

The OPHW will provide a policy advice regarding primary health care for prisoners and be a coordination point for programs that affect the overall health and wellbeing of prisoners.

It will also be a contact point to assist, support and collaborate with staff regarding other specialised policy areas. Specialised program policy areas will retain their respective policy responsibility to ensure that these remain connected to their professional groups. For example, for people in custody, specialist mental health policy will remain in the Mental Health Alcohol and Other Drugs Branch: Oral Health policy will remain with the Office of the Chief Dental Office. Likewise, HHS performance monitoring and management will remain the responsibility of the Health Purchasing and Performance Division.

The OPHW will however liaise and be a contact point to ensure that there is coordinated effort across the Department of Health and a liaison point with senior leadership within QCS.

The aim of OPHW is to ensure that health policy is coordinated within the Department of Health and that there is effectively collaboration with HHSs and senior QCS staff.

What did the Offender Health Service Review find?

The independent Offender Health Services Review found that:

- Health staff strive to provide quality health services for prisoners. Each day these staff provide health care and treatment to a group of people that are not well understood by the broader community. Prisoners generally have more complex health needs with a high prevalence of mental health conditions, communicable diseases illicit drug use, poor oral health, and chronic diseases when compared to the general population. Compounding this, is that this group is generally socially and economically disadvantaged prior to entering prison and will tend to be more so upon release into the community making them more reliant on social support systems.
- The efforts of health staff have however been hampered by a lack of leadership which has meant that many system-wide challenges such as overcrowding, insufficient clinic space and differences in operational requirements between Queensland Corrective Services and the Department of Health are not being adequately addressed.
- The consequence has been:
 - A workforce that at times feel unsupported and frustrated by their inability to deliver the level and standard of services that they strive to provide.
 - A prison population whose health care needs have not been well met.
 - A loss of focus on quality and patient-centred care.
 - Inefficiencies in the delivery of care due to the need to focus on day to day care delivery with no capacity to address issues strategically.
 - Fragmentation in the delivery of services and significant variability in the nature and availability of services

The Review recommended, amongst other things, that the Department of Health establish a state-wide program coordination unit to oversee offender health services.

Further information about the Offender Health Service Review can be found at:

<https://clinicaexcellence.qld.gov.au/priority-areas/service-improvement/offender-health-project>

Further information about the Office for Prisoner Health and Wellbeing can be obtained via email to:

offenderhealth@health.qld.gov.au