What is a ‘Serious Mental Illness’ (SMI)?

F-SOCS aims to assess CCS clients who appear to be experiencing symptoms or disturbance that indicates they may have a serious mental illness or disorder. It is anticipated these clients will need treatment by an AMHS. The DHHS target group for Adult Specialist Mental Health Services is primarily:

“people with serious mental illness or mental disorder who have associated significant levels of disturbance and psychosocial disability due to their illness or disorder.

Commonly these will be people with a diagnosis of a major mental illness, such as schizophrenia or bipolar disorder, but will include some people with severe personality disorder, severe anxiety disorder, or those who present in situational crisis that may lead to self-harm or inappropriate behaviour towards others. The distinguishing factor is the level of severity of the disturbance and impairment.”

Clients with a serious mental illness/disorder may have co-morbid personality disorder, cognitive impairment or drug and alcohol related disorders. This level of complexity contributes to difficulties in engagement and treatment.

How do you determine if someone has an SMI?

The following indicators will assist you in determining whether a person appears to have a serious mental illness and whether AMHS assessment should be considered:

- Bizarre or unusual thinking
- Hallucinations
- Significant changes of mood, such as pronounced depression, pronounced anxiety or pronounced elevation in mood
- Restless, agitated and disorganised behaviour, or marked decrease in activity
- Significant impairment of social, educational and/or occupational functioning
- Significant impairment in self-care
- Suicidal thoughts or acts of self-harm
- Destructive or high risk behaviour
- Significant memory impairment
- Confusion and disorientation
About Forensicare

Forensicare is Victoria’s leading provider of forensic mental health care. We work to meet the needs of consumers with serious mental illnesses across the justice system, mental health sectors and the community.

Our services deliver a range of mental health programs targeted at patients with different needs at different stages of recovery; from early intervention and prevention, inpatient care, rehabilitation and community transition support. These services are delivered through:

- Thomas Embling Hospital, a 116 bed, secure hospital.
- Prison Mental Health Services
- Community Forensic Mental Health Service

We also work in partnership with Swinburne University of Technology through the Centre for Forensic Behavioural Science to deliver a forensic mental health research program, specialist training and ongoing professional education.

Forensicare

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FORENSICARE
SERIOUS OFFENDER
CONSULTATION
SERVICE (F-SOCS)

Information for Community Correctional Services

Community Forensic Mental Health Service
The Forensicare Serious Offender Consultation Service (F-SOCS) is an initiative funded by the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS).

It aims to support Community Correctional Services (CCS) and Mental Health Services in the management of individuals who have a serious mental illness/disorder (SMI) and complex needs, including a history of serious violent and/or sexual offending.

About the F-SOCS

The F-SOCS program targets Community Corrections clients who are either not currently engaged with Area Mental Health Services (AMHS) or where engagement is problematic.

Individuals to be considered for referral will be those who are currently thought to pose a high risk of further serious violent and/or sexual offending.

A key aim of the F-SOCS is to provide forensic mental health assessments and facilitate access to the mental health sector for eligible offenders currently on an order supervised by Community Corrections (CCo/Parole/Detention or Supervision Order). Referrals to the F-SOCS can only be made by Community Corrections staff. A client does not require a condition placed on their order to be eligible for referral.

Who is eligible for the program?

You should consider making a referral to the F-SOCS when you have a client you think is experiencing a SMI who is also a serious violent and/or sexual offender, assessed as high risk of further violent and/or sexual offending. Eligible offenders are a very high risk group of violent and/or sexual offenders with a SMI who are not adequately engaged in treatment of their mental illness.
Referral criteria for the F-SOCS:

- Serious Violent and/or Sexual Offending History
- Currently rated as High Risk of Violent and/or Sexual Offending
- Likely presence of Serious Mental Illness/Disorder
- Engagement in mental health treatment problematic, poor or non-existent. For clients in custody, it is anticipated that difficulties in engagement with mental health treatment services will occur.
- Planned or current involvement with CCS (Parole or Court Stream). Clients must have a minimum of 3 months left on their order.

All criteria must be met.

The F-SOCS does not provide primary treatment of offenders.

Definition of Serious Violent and/or Sexual Offending:

Eligible clients are those who fall under legislative parameters that identify them as serious violent or sexual offenders (such as Sentencing Act 1991, Detention and Supervision Act 2009 or SVOSO division of the Adult Parole Board).

Other CCS clients will have significantly serious past offending, especially violence towards others or violence/sexual offending that displayed an intent towards serious harm. If the client is currently assessed as a high risk of sexual or violent re-offending (not general re-offending), they should be considered for assessment by the F-SOCS.

Referral of potential clients can include those identified during the prison pre-release planning phase. Assessment by the F-SOCS staff in this phase may assist in identifying the mental health and other treatment needs of serious violent and/or sexual offenders prior to their release into the community.
How will the F-SOCS support you?

F-SOCS is unique in that it is a mental health service working with the criminal justice sector to improve the delivery of mental health services to a high risk serious offender population.

The F-SOCS will provide Community Corrections case managers with:

- Access to specialist forensic mental health assessments and advice in relation to the management of high risk offenders with a SMI.
- Comprehensive psychiatric and psychological reports.
- Assistance in making referrals to AMHS.
- Improved access to mental health treatment for high risk serious offenders.
- Consultation and advice in relation to clients who fit the program criteria but who have not agreed to a referral/assessment.
- Ongoing consultation for clients who have been assessed by the program.

For very complex clients, the F-SOCS senior clinician will lead a time-limited process of co-ordination of service provision.

F-SOCS does not have the capacity to provide urgent assessments. However, the F-SOCS may be able to assist the CCS case manager in accessing acute mental health services for current F-SOCS clients or clients who would meet program criteria.

How to proceed with a referral:

If you have a client you believe meets the F-SOCS referral criteria for both SMI and Serious Violent and/or Sexual Offending, you should discuss this with your Principal Practitioner or Operations Manager. If they are in agreement that criteria is fulfilled, please contact the Community Forensic Mental Health Service and ask to speak with F-SOCS Coordinator, who will complete a pre-referral consultation with you. If the referral meets F-SOCS criteria, instructions on how to proceed with a referral to the program will be provided.

F-SOCS Coordinator
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