

Mentally healthy communities

Good mental health is fundamental to the wellbeing of individuals, families and communities. WA Primary Health Alliance (WAPHA) understands the important role primary care plays in supporting whole communities to be mentally healthy.

WAPHA is leading the implementation of the Alliance Against Depression as a key strategic approach to achieving the vision of improved health equity in WA. The strong link between depression and suicide requires a focus on improving access to primary mental healthcare for all people. This can be achieved by raising awareness of depression, by increasing the number of people who seek treatment, and by reducing stigma associated with depression and suicide.

The Alliance Against Depression is an approach based on evaluated trials and is recognised as the world’s best practice for the care of people with depression and in the prevention of suicide. The initial implementation of the framework in the trial region of Nuremberg (The Nuremberg Alliance Against Depression) resulted in a 24 per cent reduction of suicidal acts within a two year period. The Alliance Against Depression can be adapted to meet the specific cultural and regional needs of a community and has been successfully implemented internationally.

The Alliance Against Depression Framework



The evidence from the European Alliance Against Depression studies revealed that while there is value in intervening through each pillar, real impact on the reduction of suicide only comes with integration of activities in all four.

Alliance Against Depression for your community

Establishing a local Alliance Against Depression helps a community work together on:

- Public awareness campaigns to reduce the stigma associated with depression and suicide;
- Support for high-risk groups, patients and their families;
- Localised training for health professionals, including GPs; and
- Education activities on depression and suicide for community members and leaders.

The international evidence is that this leads to increased access to primary mental health care, improved identification and treatment rates of depression by general practitioners and specialised mental health professionals, and improved service and program support for people at risk as well as their family and carers.

This evidence-based approach aims to build strong connected communities, where the established local Alliance activities can continue to recognise depression and respond to the ongoing needs and concerns of the community.

Anyone can start an Alliance

All local Alliances start with a small number of people wanting to improve the mental health and wellbeing of their community. Those ‘initiators’ then follow three stages to work with networks across the community to plan, prepare and implement their local Alliance.

WAPHA can help local Alliances to get started by providing relevant health data, including information on primary care services that target mental wellbeing. The Alliance Against Depression Coordination Centre at WAPHA can continue to help at each stage.

WAPHA supports local Alliances with resources, tools, case studies and co-ordination support. The Alliance Against Depression Coordination Centre is continually adding to the resources for use by local Alliances. These support materials are being informed by the European Alliance Against Depression Coordination Centre (Germany) and from other Alliances globally.

For more information on forming an Alliance in your community contact the Alliance Against Depression Coordination Centre at WA Primary Health Alliance

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Acknowledgement



WA Primary Health Alliance acknowledges and pays respect to the Traditional Owners and Elders of the country on which we work and live and recognises the significant importance of their cultural heritage, values and beliefs and how these contribute to the positive wellbeing of the whole community.

Disclaimer

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The Alliance Against Depression

An integrated, community-based approach to tackling depression and suicide.





# The Alliance Against Depression

An integrated, community-based approach to tackling depression and suicide.

## STAGE 1: Preparation (0-6 months)

You have decided that your community needs to take action to prevent suicide and to improve the awareness and treatment of depression.

You can begin by identifying any existing depression and suicide prevention programs in your community and by talking about the Alliance Against Depression within your existing networks. Establishing an Alliance aims to connect and strengthen communities, not duplicate or replace existing activities.

- 1 Define the geographic place of your Alliance and identify what your community needs to support its mental health and wellbeing.
- 2 Build your network by bringing together Alliance members and other local partners.
- 3 Identify an Alliance Coordinator. This may be an individual or an organisation.
- 4 Analyse available financial, personal and local resources. Consider which activities will require funding e.g. media advertising, training.
- 5 Prepare for your first community meeting and form a steering committee.
- 6 Set SMART goals. Outline actions and responsibilities.

## STAGE 2: Planning (6-12 months)

- 1 Explore how your community will know your Alliance is making a difference.
- 2 Involve local media in your Alliance.
- 3 Involve a well known community leader or champion to promote your local Alliance.
- 4 Organise mental health and suicide training to potential community trainers.
- 5 Identify activities to support at-risk groups in your community and build broad awareness of depression.
- 6 Plan the first public Alliance events and invite current and potential stakeholders.
- 7 Plan the first training events for the primary mental healthcare sector, community facilitators, media and the broader community.
- 8 Prepare for the launch of your Alliance.

## STAGE 3: Implementation (12-18 months)

- 1 Launch your Alliance to mark the beginning of the coordinated approach in your community.
- 2 Deliver talks and public events to raise community awareness of depression and suicide.
- 3 Cooperate closely with media to ensure responsible reporting of depression and suicide in your community.
- 4 Ensure there is access to emergency support for people after non-fatal suicide.
- 5 Coordinate training for community facilitators and primary mental healthcare providers (including GPs).
- 6 Distribute information materials about depression and suicide and how to access treatment throughout your community.
- 7 Ensure that self-help activities and support groups are in place for people, their family and carers.
- 8 Continue to facilitate Alliance activities and to measure the progress and impact in your community.

wapha.org.au

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**WA Primary Health Alliance**  
Better health, together

**phn**  
PERTH NORTH, PERTH SOUTH, COUNTRY WA  
An Australian Government Initiative

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