Physical Health Screening of People with a Mental Illness in Gippsland

Objectives:
1. By June 2013 35 people with a mental illness will have received improved personal physical health screening and health interventions through participation in a health screen pilot.

2. By June 2013 organisational staff from 7 Gippsland community managed PDRSS agencies will have an improved understanding of practice associated with implementation of client physical health screening through participation in professional development opportunities.

3. By June 2013 project partners will be able to demonstrate improved organisational practice in undertaking client physical health screening through shared development of a screening tool and participation in a client health screen pilot.

4. By June 2013 the views of carers and consumers will have been incorporated into the health screen pilot through the establishment of a consumer/carer advisory group.

Description:
Due to poor physical health including increased risks of diabetes, heart disease and cancer people with a mental illness live between 10-32 years less than the general population. Improving the physical health of people with a severe mental illness is a priority area for the state government. Research suggests that although people with a mental illness visit physical health services most consultations focus on mental rather than physical health (Morgan, et al. 2011):

The Gippsland Physical Health Screening Tool project aims to contribute to improving the physical health of people with a severe mental illness who live in Gippsland. The project plans to do this by piloting a physical health screening tool that mental health workers can use to assist clients in identifying and addressing their physical health needs.

Expected Outcomes:
Short Term:
- Contribute to increased understanding of health literacy for staff, consumers and carers.
- Contribute to increased understanding of physical health screening practice by staff, consumers and carers.
- Contribute to improved health behaviours in people with a mental illness.
- Contribute to increase in access to physical health care for people with a mental illness.

Long Term:
- Improve the physical health outcomes of mental health consumers.
- Increase self efficacy of consumers in the identification and care of their physical health.
- Physical health screening becomes a regular practice in the service system.