

## Increasing Sexual Safety Awareness and Capacity for Mental Health Professionals

**Authors :** Tara Hunter, Kristine Concepcion, Wendy Cheng, Brianna Pike, Jane Estoesta, Anne Stuart

**Abstract :** In 2015, Family Planning NSW was contracted by the NSW Ministry of Health to design and deliver Sexual Safety Policy training (SSPT) to mental health professionals across NSW. The training was based on their current guidelines and developed in consultation with an expert reference group. From October 2015 to April 2017 it was delivered to over 2,400 mental health professionals with a view to supporting implementation of consistent prevention and intervention related to sexual safety in the mental health setting. An evaluation was undertaken to determine the knowledge and confidence of participants related to sexual safety before and after the training, and whether any improvements were translated into changes in practice. Participants were invited to complete a survey prior to the training, upon completion and three to six months thereafter. Telephone interviews were conducted among service managers and mental health champions six months post-training. Prior to training, the majority of mental health professionals reported being slightly to moderately confident in identifying a sexual safety incident. When asked on their understanding of sexual safety, gender sensitive practice and trauma informed care, they reported no confidence, slight confidence and moderate confidence. Immediately after the training, 54.5% reported being very confident and 10.9% extremely confident in identifying a sexual safety incident. More than half felt very confident or extremely confident in their understanding of sexual safety principles. The impact survey (six months later) found that the majority of participants (91%) were highly confident in identifying a sexual safety incident. Telephone interviewees reported a change in workplace culture and increased awareness after the training. Mental health professionals experienced increased knowledge and confidence about sexual safety principles following the training and were able to implement positive changes and concrete actions to better address sexual safety issues in their workplace.

**Keywords :** sexual safety, mental health professionals, trauma informed care, policy training

**Conference Title :** ICMH 2018 : International Conference on Mental Health

**Conference Location :** Sydney, Australia

**Conference Dates :** January 29-30, 2018