



Community Participation in Health

HealthWest recognises the rights of individuals to be informed and included in decisions which impact on their health. Active participation by community members ensures that community needs and opinions are included when health and wellbeing decisions are being made. HealthWest recognises that consumers, families and communities are valuable partners in improving the local health system. We value the expertise, knowledge and experience that they possess.

Why is community participation a priority?

Including consumers and communities in health-related decision making benefits individuals, organisations and the health system as a whole. Individuals are empowered to be active partners in their health which leads to better health care. Organisations are able to identify community needs and can provide information and services that respond to this need in an accessible and appropriate way. Across the health system, policies better reflect the diverse needs of communities while greater accountability and transparency is encouraged.

Community participation is essential to promote the health of disadvantaged communities. HealthWest recognises there are structural barriers that prevent participation in health. Many of these are deeply embedded in our health system. Vulnerable and disadvantaged people are likely to face more barriers to participation, which will lead to further disadvantage. It is important to acknowledge differences in power of those involved. Power differences exist for social, cultural and historical reasons and can affect the ability of community members to participate fully.

What is HealthWest doing?

HealthWest is committed to community participation in health and has identified this as a strategic priority for 2013 to 2017. We recognise that community participation is not an endpoint but rather an ongoing process and we commit to engaging in this process.

HealthWest will support systems and processes which empower community to actively participate in health. HealthWest is committed to supporting evidence-based practice in community participation through the establishment of a community of practice. We will provide a platform for joint planning that supports a more coordinated and evidence-based approach to community participation across the region. We will work with our members to identify the structural barriers to community participation in health. This will allow the development of inclusive processes that capture the diversity that exists within our communities.

HealthWest will also work with community, enabling them to assess their own health needs and problems, plan and implement solutions and evaluate their efforts to bring about any necessary changes.

Endorsed by HealthWest Partnership Board

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