

# SA Prison Health Service

Enhancing Prison Healthcare in South Australia: The  
Role of Nurse Practitioners in Chronic Disease  
Management and Culturally Responsive Care

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# South Australia Prison Health Service (SAPHS) Overview

Providing Primary Healthcare in South Australian Prisons

Complexity of prisoner health:

- \*high prevalence of chronic disease
- \*mental illness
- \*substance use disorders
- \*cultural diversity



# Role of Nurse Practitioners in SAPHS

- NPs bridge the gap between nursing and medical practice — providing autonomous, holistic, and accessible care.
- NPs are well-suited for custodial settings due to their adaptability, advanced assessment skills, and strong therapeutic relationships with patients.
- In prisons, NPs often act as the first point of clinical contact, offering both acute and chronic care management, health promotion, and continuity of care.
- NPs provide a flexible, cost-effective, and patient-centered alternative that aligns with the constraints of correctional environments.

# Chronic Disease Management in Prisons



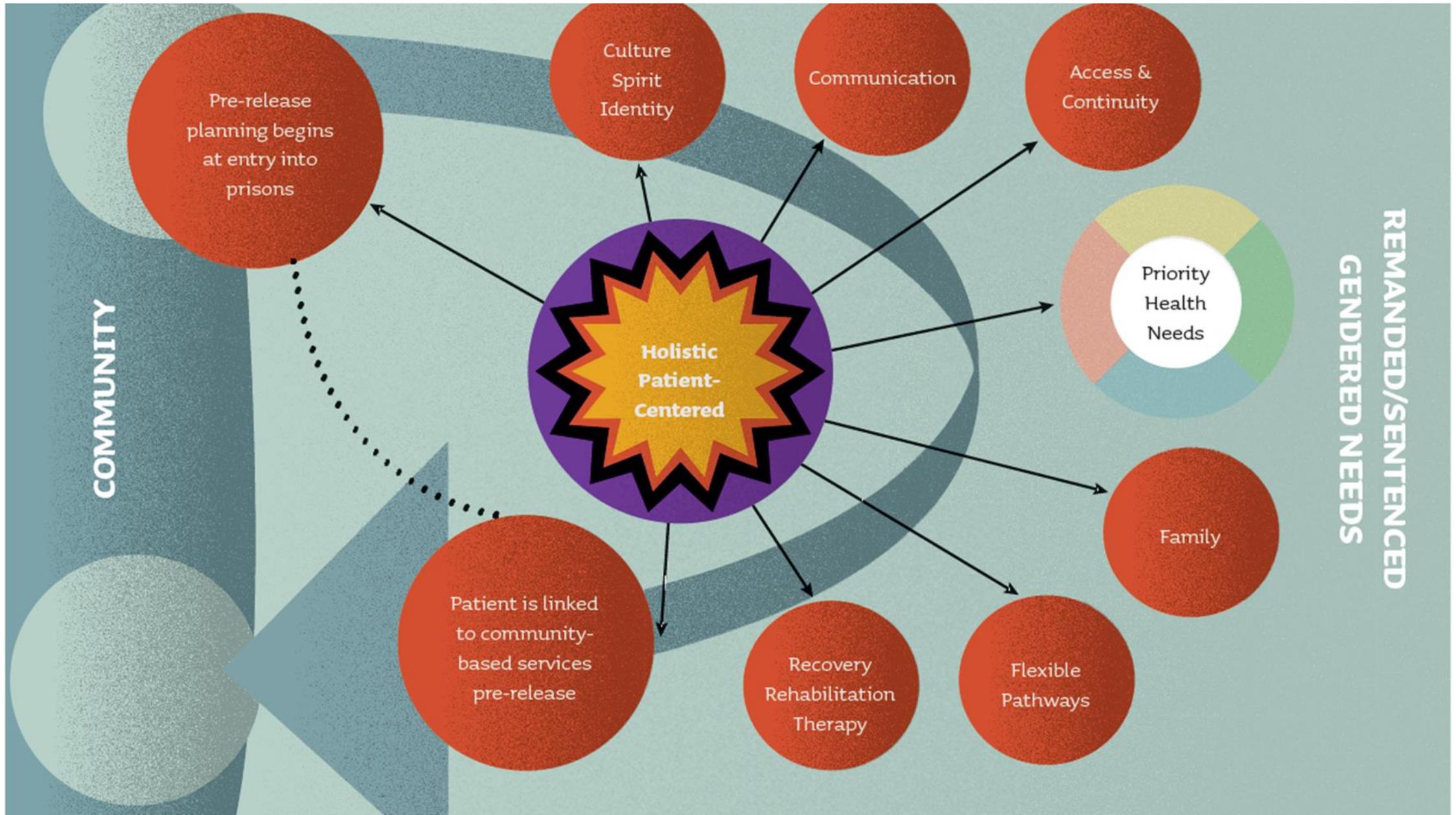
- Each NP provides care for **2,500–3,800 patients annually** — over 10,000 **prisoners** across SAPHS.
- **NPs lead chronic disease management**, improving diagnosis, treatment, and continuity of care.
- Work effectively within **restricted access and security protocols** unique to prison settings.
- Navigate **resource and diagnostic limitations** while delivering evidence-based care.
- Address challenges of a **fragmented healthcare system** through collaboration and innovation.
- Enhance **patient experience** through culturally responsive, person-centred approaches.
- Advocate for **expanded NP roles** and **improved coordination** between services.
- Promote **cultural safety**, accessibility, and **community health education** initiatives.
- Provide **leadership and mentorship** within multidisciplinary teams to strengthen prison health outcomes.

# Culturally Responsive Care Implementing Culturally Safe Healthcare Practices

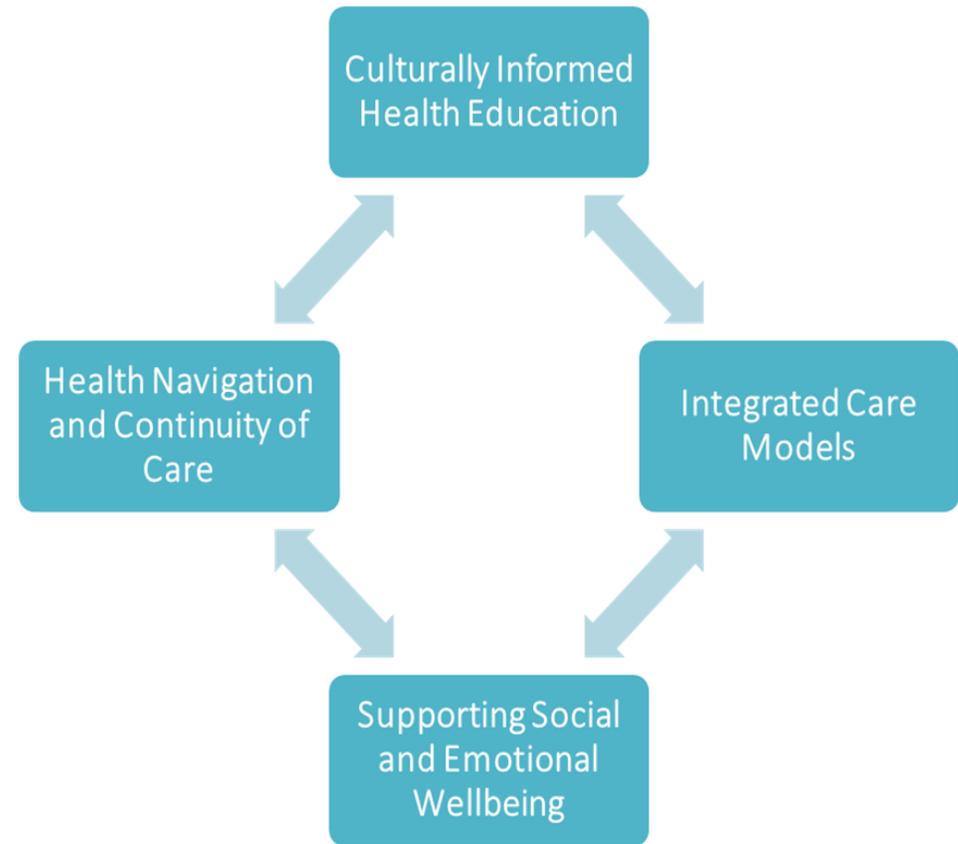
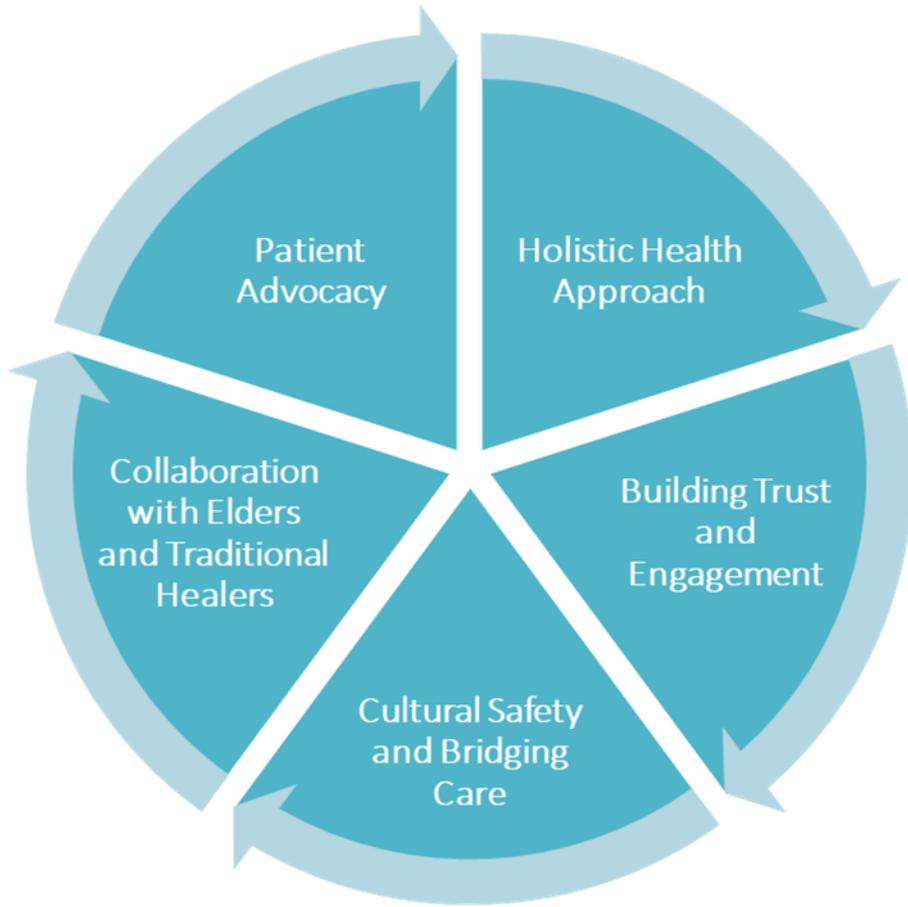
## Integrating South Australian Health and Medical Research Institute (SAHMRI's) Model of Care for Aboriginal Prisoners

- **Chronic Disease Management Clinics** – early detection, treatment, and ongoing management of long-term conditions.
- **Mental Health and Wellbeing Support** – trauma-informed, person-centred approaches to psychological care.
- **Substance Use Harm Reduction and Rehabilitation** – promoting recovery and reducing relapse within custodial settings.
- **Cultural Connection and Healing Programs** – incorporating Aboriginal health frameworks and community partnerships.
- **Health Education and Prevention Initiatives** – empowering prisoners through culturally appropriate education and self-management skills.





# Integration of Nurse Practitioners in Culturally Responsive Care



## Prisoner Feedback Story – Port Augusta Prison

"Before I saw the nurse practitioner, I was always tired, and my sugar levels were up and down. I didn't really understand what was going on with my body. The nurse took the time to talk to me and explain things in a way I could understand. She helped me plan for my food and medicines and showed me how to check my sugar the right way.

Now, I feel more in control. I've cut down on the smokes, started walking more in the yard, and I take my tablets on time. The nurse checks in with me each week and listens when I talk about what's happening. It's made me feel respected and cared for.

As an Aboriginal man, it means a lot when someone understands where you come from and takes the time to help you properly. Seeing the nurse practitioner has made a big difference in my health and my confidence."

## Learning About My Medicines" – Medication Understanding

"I used to just take whatever tablets they gave me without thinking. The nurse practitioner took time to go through each one and told me what they do. She even wrote it down for me in plain words so I could remember. I understand now what's for my blood pressure and what's for my kidneys. I feel like I've got control over my health instead of just doing what I'm told. That makes a big difference."



## Advancing Prison Healthcare Through Nurse Practitioner Integration

Nurse Practitioners are transforming custodial healthcare by delivering high-quality, culturally safe, and patient-centred services.

Their role ensures continuity, accessibility, and responsiveness in managing complex chronic diseases.

The NP model represents a sustainable, future-focused approach to prison healthcare delivery in South Australia.





No one truly knows a nation until one has been inside its jails. A nation should not be judged by how it treats its highest citizens but its lowest ones.

(Nelson Mandela)

# Thank you

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3. Australian Primary Health Care Nurses Association. (2020). *Nursing in prison: How a nurse-led clinic is making a difference in the lives of older prisoners with chronic health conditions*. Australian Nursing and Midwifery Journal. Retrieved from <https://anmj.org.au/nursing-in-prison-how-a-nurse-led-clinic-is-making-a-difference-in-the-lives-of-older-prisoners-with-chronic-health-conditions/>
4. Australian College of Nurse Practitioners. (2021). *Nurse Practitioner Career Pathway*. Retrieved from <https://www.acnp.org.au/how-to-become-a-np>

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