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For more information, speak to anyone on your care team today.




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NSW Health



# NSW Mental Health Influenza Vaccination Program 2024-25: Supporting the physical health of mental health consumers

Cherie Power, Principal Policy Officer  
Keira Mathews, Senior Policy Officer  
Mental Health Branch, **NSW Ministry of Health**

2025 Equally Well conference

20 November 2025

# Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as the Traditional Custodians of the lands and waters on which we all work, live and learn. We recognise the incredible richness, strength and resilience of the world's oldest living cultures, including cultural practices, languages and connection to Country.

We pay our respects to Aboriginal Elders past, present and future.

# Acknowledgement of Lived Experience



We acknowledge the lived experience of those with mental illness. Their preferences, wishes, needs and aspirations are at the heart of all the work we do.

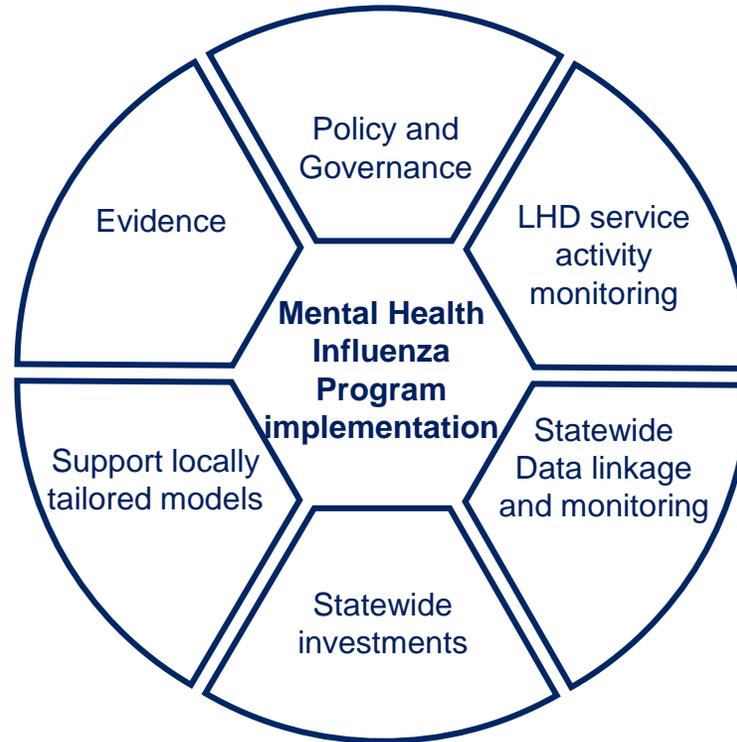
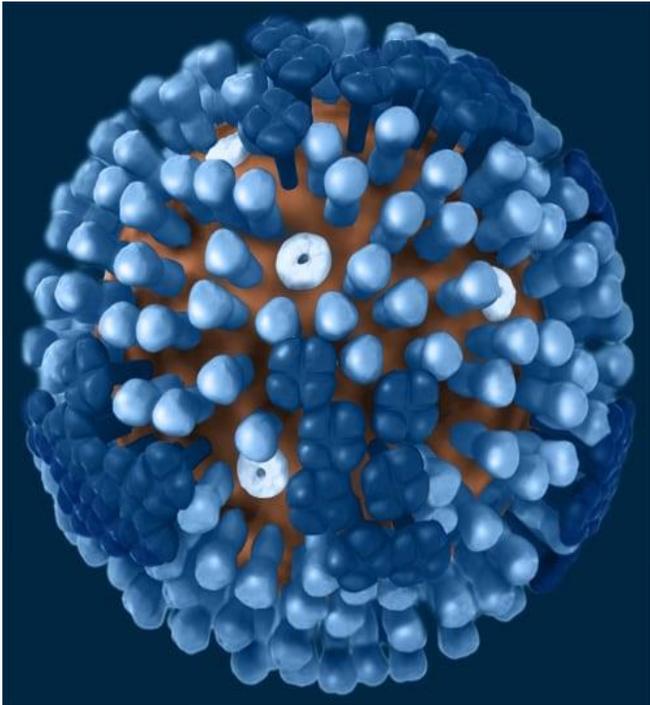
We acknowledge the families and carers, along with the clinicians and health workers, who provide care and support to people with a lived and living experience of mental ill health.

# 1

## Why develop a vaccination program for mental health consumers?

NSW Health Mental Health Influenza Vaccination Program

# Program origins and drivers



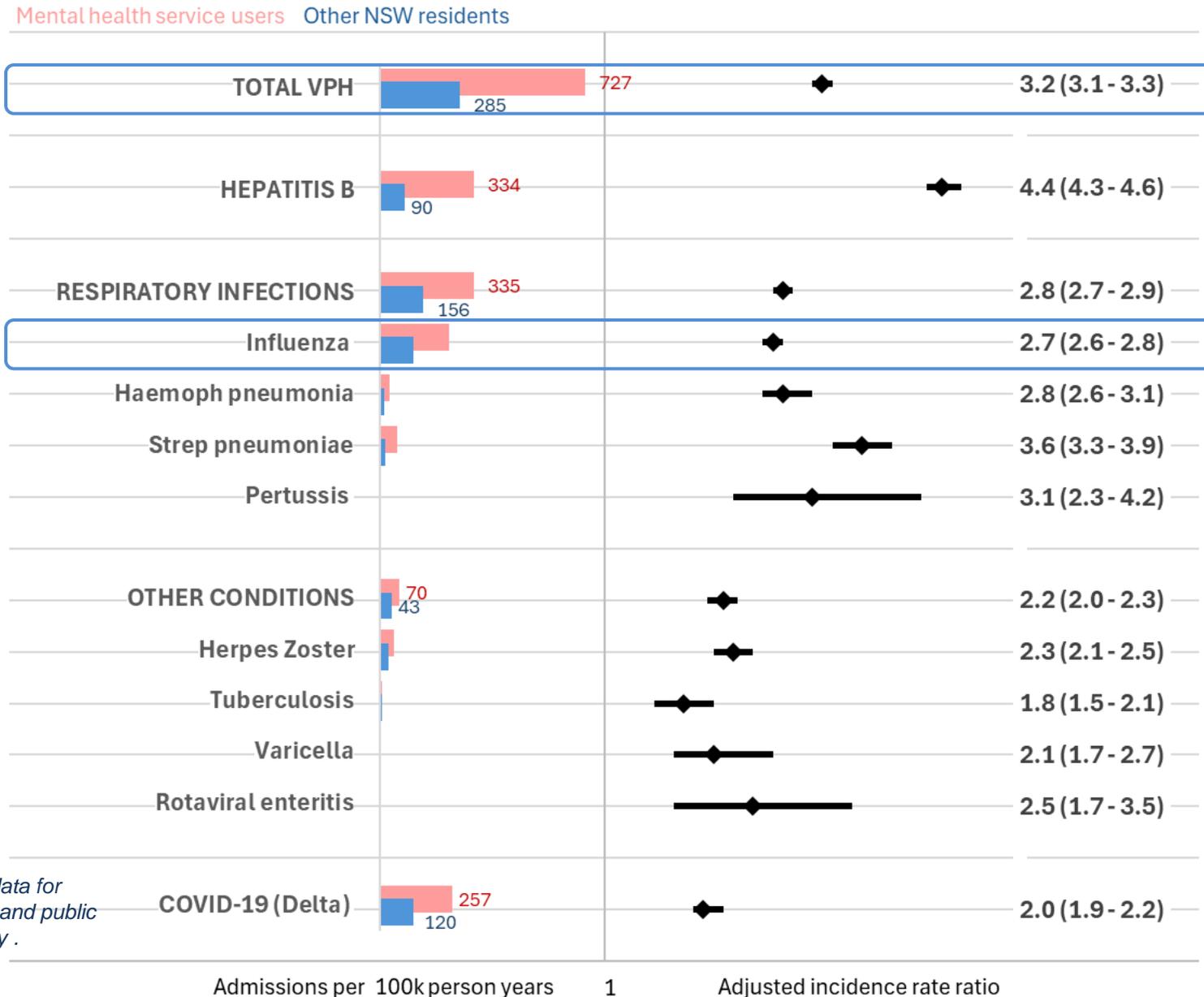
## Vaccine-preventable hospitalisations in adult mental health service users: a population study

Grant Sara<sup>1,2,3</sup> , Patrick Gould<sup>2</sup> , Jackie Curtis<sup>2</sup> , Wendy Chen<sup>3</sup>,  
Michael Lau<sup>4</sup>, Parashar Ramanuj<sup>5</sup> , David Currow<sup>6</sup>  and Philip Burgess<sup>7</sup> 

# NSW MH service users had 2.7x more influenza hospitalisations

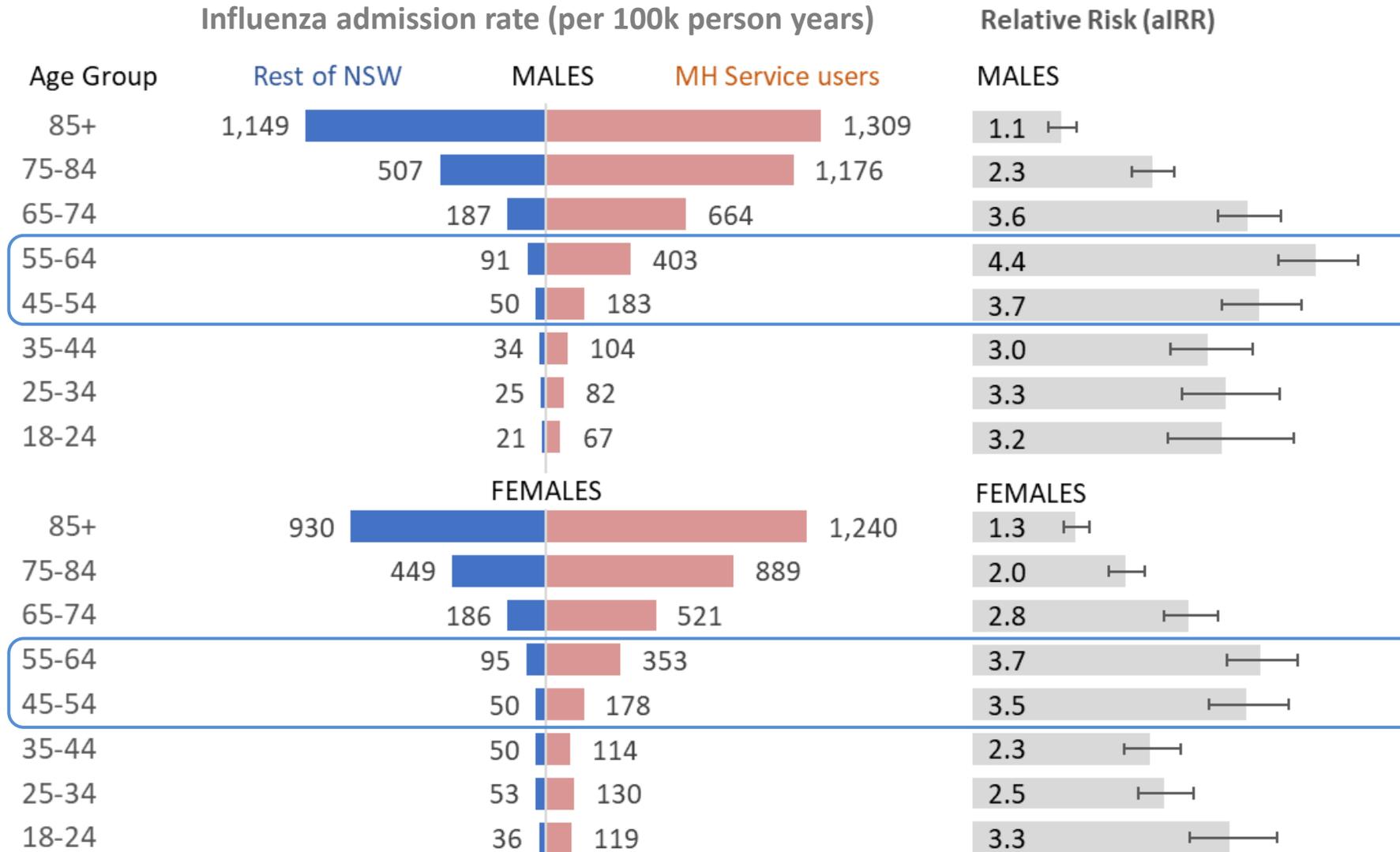


Influenza, Hepatitis B, Zoster (+ COVID) the most common conditions leading to admission



COVID-19 data for Delta period and public hospitals only.

# MH service users aged 45-65 are at particular risk



MH rates aged 45-54 = Population rates aged 65-74

# In the 2023 flu season NSW mental health service users were ...



↓ **27%**

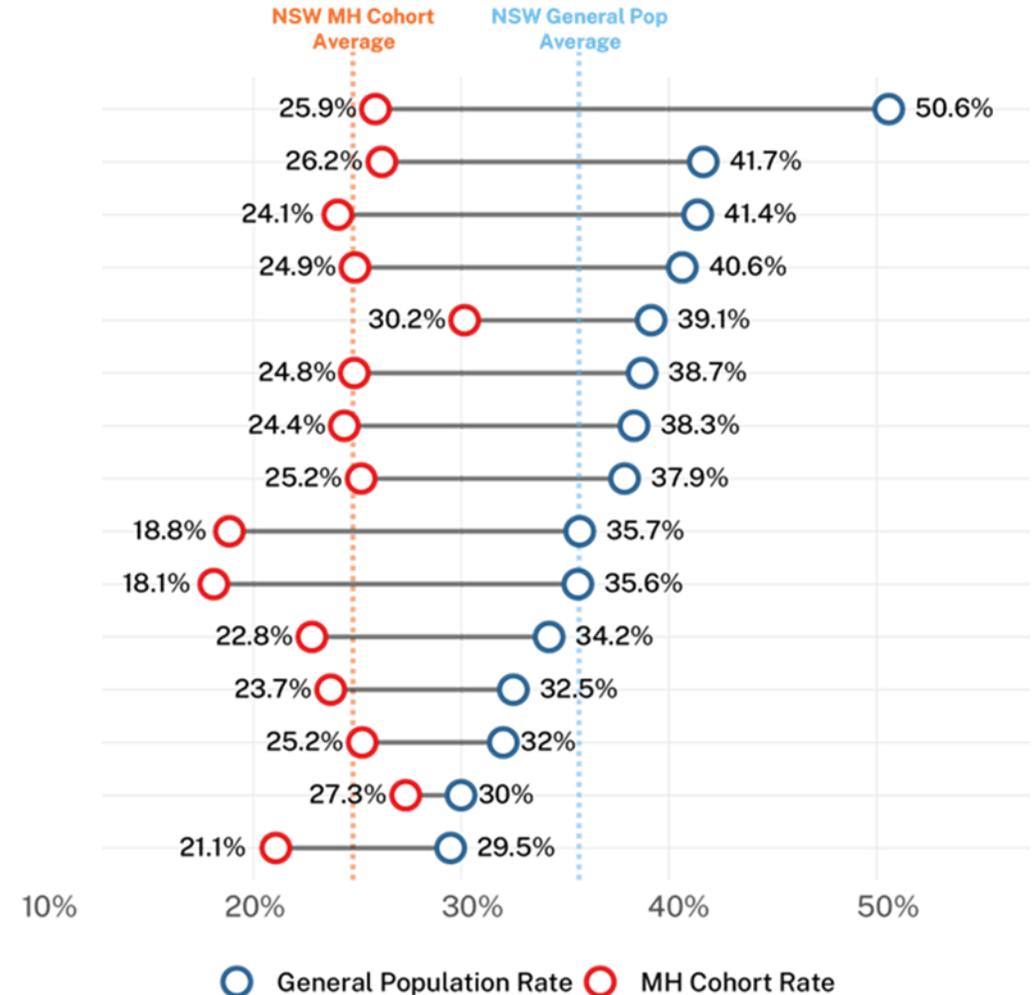
Less likely to receive a flu vaccine

↑ **2.6x**

More likely to be admitted to hospital for flu

... than other NSW residents

### Influenza Vaccine Rate by LHD for 2023



# 2

## About the program

NSW Health Mental Health Influenza Vaccination Program

# The Program

## Program aims:

- Increase influenza vaccination rates among NSW mental health service users  supporting NSW mental health services to increase influenza vaccination in mental health consumers including through opportunistic vaccination.
- Build capacity to embed influenza vaccine delivery into routine mental health care  supporting mental health services implementing the NSW Health Opportunistic Immunisation Toolkit.
- Reduce health disparities for NSW mental health service users  providing vaccines under the National Immunisation Program with additional state-funded vaccines provided for consumers not eligible for NIP vaccines.

## Collaborative NSW Health initiative

- Mental Health Branch, Health Protection NSW, InforMH
- Clinicians in districts and networks
- Public health units
- Public hospital pharmacies
- BEING Mental Health Consumers
- Mental Health Carers NSW

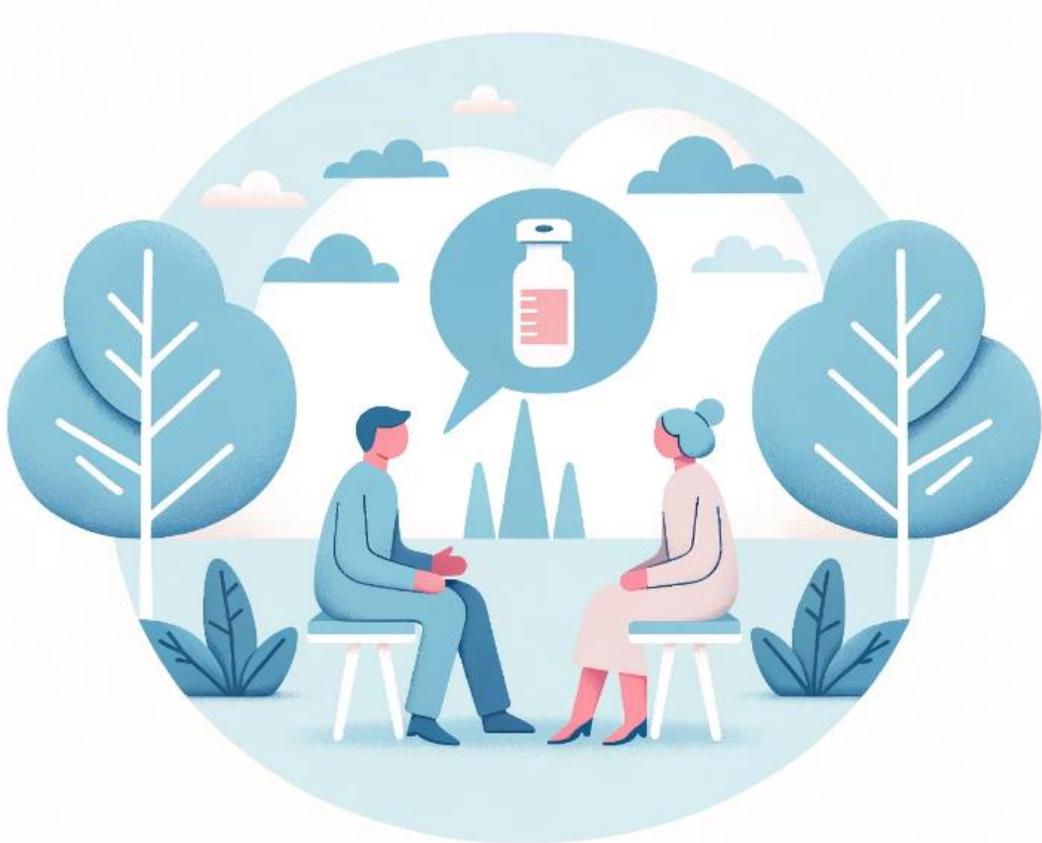
# Piloting the Program - 2024 flu season

- **Early March** – provider communications circulated regarding vaccine ordering circulated.
- **Early March** – State Vaccine Centre online system opened for placing influenza vaccine orders.
- **Mid - late March** – commencement of vaccine distribution to Local Health Districts
- **April** – recommended time to start vaccinating.
- **Mid-April** – NSW influenza campaign in market.
- **June to September** – NSW influenza season occurs

Viruses like influenza (flu), respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) and COVID-19 are around.

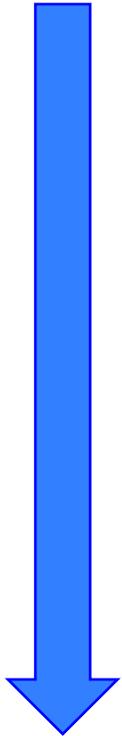


# Piloting the Program - Community of Practice



- Aimed at NSW Health Mental Health Services, BEING Mental Health Consumers, Mental Health Carers NSW, Public Health Units
- Enabled exchange of resources, best practices, challenges to be addressed, troubleshooting
- Included presentations from content/clinical experts
- Met every 2-3 weeks between March & July 2024

# Program implementation options for mental health services



## Advice & Referrals

Disseminating vaccination information and referring consumers to external immunisation providers, e.g. GPs, community pharmacies

## Transport Coordination

Mental health services arranging transport for consumers to vaccination sites.

## In-Reach Services

Partnering with existing immunisation providers to provide in-reach vaccination services to mental health facilities.

## Direct Vaccination

Mental health services directly administering vaccines on-site to consumers

**Increasing impact and resource use**

# Building on the Program in 2025: ANI training

## About the training

- In partnership with Health Protection NSW
- Mental Health Branch funded 101 registered nurses working in mental health settings to complete **Authorised Nurse Immuniser** training
- Nurses from rural, regional, remote and community mental health settings were prioritised



## What the training means for mental health services

- Builds critical vaccination capability
- Facilitates direct and opportunistic vaccination for mental health consumers
- Aligns with the NSW Health Immunisation Strategy
- Addresses barriers to vaccination like hesitancy, time, travelling distance, access and cost

# 3

## Program resources

NSW Health Mental Health Influenza Vaccination Program

# Promotional materials

## Promotional posters



## Strategic Communications and Engagement Branch

### 2025 winter respiratory illness campaign resources

Resources available include:

- Posters
- tent cards
- digital screens
- social media tiles
- stickers



# Other helpful materials available to mental health services

## WEBINARS

Previous program webinars available on the internal NSW Mental Health Influenza Vaccination Program site

## FAQs

Frequently asked questions can be found on the internal NSW Mental Health Influenza Vaccination Program site

## PUBLIC HEALTH UNITS

Contact your Public Health Unit for additional support implementing the program.

## Resources to support program implementation

## COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE

2024 program CoP materials available on the internal NSW Mental Health Influenza Vaccination Program site

## HPNSW IMMUNISATION TEAM

Immunisation team, Health Protection NSW (HPNSW) available for support

# 4

## Evaluation and learnings

NSW Health Mental Health Influenza Vaccination Program

# Program evaluation: data driven improvement

Quantitative evaluation - data linkage on 2024 results:

- **immunisation rates**
- **notifiable disease rates**
- **hospitalisations**
- **mortality**

Qualitative surveys - Program implementation



# Implementation and qualitative evaluation data: 2024 Program



8 CoPs held

18 local health districts / speciality health networks attended at least one CoP

3 public health units attended at least one CoP

4 local health districts presented on their consumer flu vaccination activities

## LHD and SHN program implementation survey

- 14 District and Network responses received
- 100% supported the program running again in 2025
- **Top 3 major barriers** to program implementation:
  1. Availability of Authorised Nurse Immunisers (ANIs) in mental health services
  2. Limited time available to plan implementation
  3. Vaccine hesitancy

# Next steps

- ❖ Finalise data linkage results on 2024 season vaccination & hospitalisation rates
- ❖ Build on learnings
- ❖ Plan for 2026 program

Questions?



Email contact: [moh-mhb-clinicalprograms-adultmh@health.nsw.gov.au](mailto:moh-mhb-clinicalprograms-adultmh@health.nsw.gov.au)