

Supporting Victorian Healthcare Services to adopt the Zero Suicide Framework

The Mental Health Improvement Program (MHIP) is partnering with and supporting Victorian healthcare services to adopt the Zero Suicide Framework.

The Zero Suicide Framework aims to improve the pathway of care for individuals experiencing suicidal thoughts and behaviours and support their families, carers and supporters. The 2021 Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System highlighted the framework as an opportunity for services to improve care for people with suicidal thoughts and behaviours.

The focus of the Zero Suicide Framework

The Zero Suicide Framework is not a target, but is a globally recognised framework structured under seven focus areas. It sets out proven tools, processes and practices that help services improve the experience of care they can provide to consumers with suicidal thoughts and behaviours, their families and carers. It importantly also builds a supportive workplace culture and promotes workforce wellbeing for those delivering care.

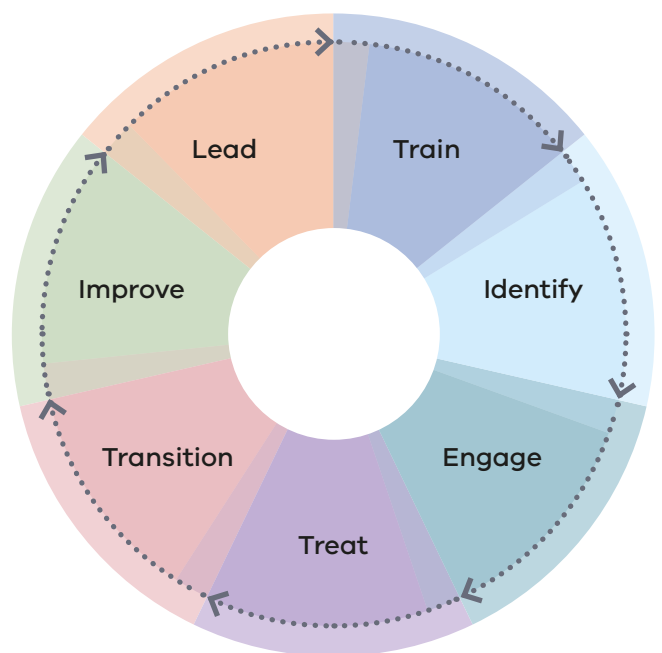
The framework also focuses on improving care for consumers by building the capability and confidence of the workforce who support and care for consumers.

The MHIP team supports Victorian healthcare services to align and refine their current approaches, through using improvement science and drawing on the perspectives of those with lived and living experience.

The adoption of the Zero Suicide Framework in Victoria is unique as services are supported by the MHIP to localise the specific improvements they want to prioritise.

Partnering services are also supported by the MHIP to share their learnings and insights with other services. This enables collaboration and growth of workforce capability to drive and sustain meaningful improvement.

Figure 1 – The Zero Suicide Framework seven domains



Sensitive content warning

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How we partner for lasting change

Beginning with a tailored workshop facilitated by the MHIP, Victorian healthcare services are able to map the strengths of their organisation against the framework. They are also supported to examine where opportunities exist to improve their practice for care delivery that aligns with the seven Zero Suicide Framework domains. These might include change ideas like providing additional workforce training, uplifting culture, improving communication between consumers, families and carers with healthcare teams.

Following the workshop, services can opt to partner with MHIP, to benefit from the tailored support of the SCV team to actively plan and test improvements aligned to the Framework.

Together, the MHIP and services plan the improvements they believe will make the greatest impact. Participating services test changes in practice and evaluate how effective they have been in improving the quality of care they can provide for consumers, their family and carers. They also examine how well changes are impacting the capability and confidence of the workforce who support them.

Services can alternatively opt for the MHIP to support them outside of a partnership, by providing resources that grow their knowledge of the Framework and how they may independently work on practice improvements in their service to better align with it.

How the changes may look

In participating services working to adopt the framework, some of the improvements have included:

- an additional support person for clinicians who are engaging in an incident review process; and
- increasing contact with family or a carer following a consumer leaving a high-risk setting to help support them better.

In the future, the MHIP team aims to work with services to help ensure safety management plans are introduced for every consumer, every time.

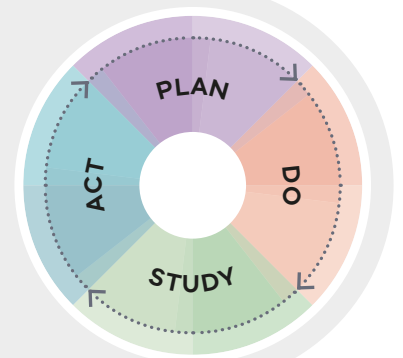
Having on the ground teams trialing incremental changes in real time helps to build workforce capability in services and supports them to help lead and support critical change.

Model for improvement

What are we trying to accomplish

How will we know a change is an improvement

What change can we make that will result in an improvement



Change in action

The regional experience

Merryl Whyte, Director of Transformation, Mental Health Unit at Mildura Base Public Hospital said the hospital has been pursuing improvements since participating in a Suicide Prevention Trial which ended in 2022.

“ Our hospital has been looking for ways we can continue to improve the experience we offer those with suicidal thoughts, their families, carers and our workforce.

“ Partnering with the MHIP to use the framework as a way to drive change further in our hospital was a timely, natural step for us. It enabled us to understand where we were at and what further we could work on. It also allowed the team to be fully engaged in our goals – we all helped create change ideas for us to trial.

“ A key early initiative for us has been the surveying of our workforce. We have been able to hear from a diverse range of voices who provide care to those with suicidal thoughts on how confident and capable they feel and what else they need to support them in providing care.

“ This insight is directly helping to inform the support, learning and clinical practice improvements the hospital will make to help inform what the hospital does to continue to improve the experience of consumers with suicidal thoughts and behaviours.

The metro experience

At Eastern Health, Anthony White, Social Work Clinical Educator and Clinical Lead – Infant, Child and Youth Mental Health Service said their initial focus has been on child and youth health.

“ An important opportunity for us at Eastern Health Youth Services has been helping our service make lasting change in the way we identify, engage and treat young people presenting with suicidal thoughts and behaviours.

“ Building up our workforce’s wellbeing helps to support the quality of care provided, improves staff retention, and acknowledges the complex and challenging nature of this work.



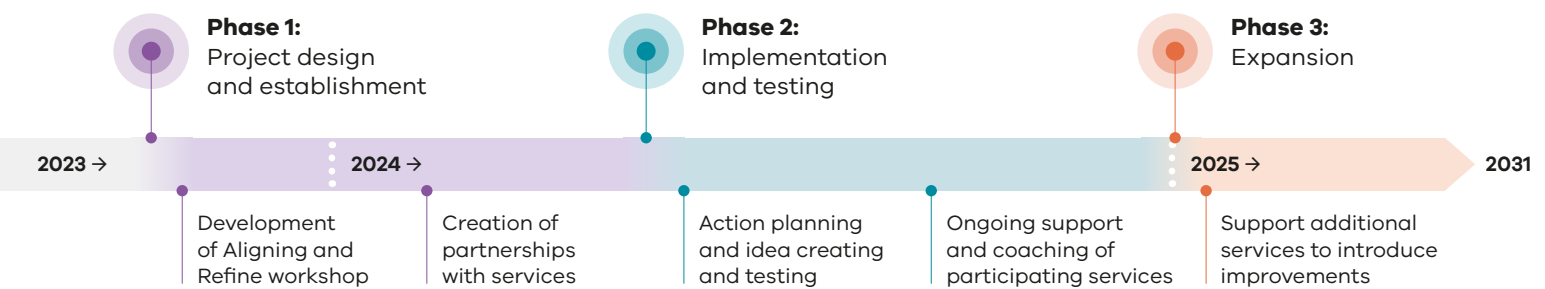
Path to adoption in Victoria

Four mental health and wellbeing services are currently partnered, with the aim to for more services to establish partnerships with MHIP throughout 2024/25.

With the support of the MHIP, these services have been sharing learnings arising from the introduction of changes made in alignment to the ZSF. This provides further opportunity to build the capability and confidence of the workforce

to improve practice when caring for consumers with suicidal thoughts and behaviours, their family and carers

While the MHIP partnerships are being established with mental health and wellbeing services to begin with, the aim is to support adoption of the Zero Suicide Framework across all Victorian healthcare services by 2031.



This material adapts content from the Zero Suicide Toolkit. The Zero Suicide Toolkit is administered by Zero Suicide Institute at Education Development Center (EDC), Inc. EDC developed the Zero Suicide framework through the federally-funded Suicide Prevention Resource Center and National Action Alliance for Suicide Prevention. The Zero Suicide Toolkit can be found at zerosuicide.edc.org.

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