

A Framework for the Menu of Evidence-informed Practices and Programs

Cover note

Purpose

This cover note is to be read in conjunction with the *Framework for a menu of evidence-informed practices and programs: Menu Framework Report* and the *Framework for a menu of evidence-informed practices and programs: Synthesis Report*. It outlines the consultation process that was undertaken for the development of these reports and the next stages of development for the menu of evidence-informed practices and programs (the menu).

The development of these reports provided a valuable opportunity to benefit from the experience of other relevant menus and repositories to develop one that is contemporary and credible. Findings from a review of these other approaches, both in Australia and internationally, are detailed in the Synthesis Report.

Introduction

The future child and family service system will meet the changing needs of clients and achieve better outcomes by supporting flexibility, integration, innovation and effectiveness. A focus on client outcomes, simpler funding arrangements and evidence are key reform elements that will work together to support this vision.

A key part of the reform of the child and family service system is the delivery of the menu to provide access to evidence on what works for children and families. Delivering a menu that is updated with the latest and most innovative evidence will assist the child and family service system to continually question, re-evaluate, refine and improve the performance of services.

A framework for the menu

In 2017, the department commissioned the Centre for Evidence and Implementation to deliver a framework for the development and implementation of the menu (the Menu Framework). The purpose of the Menu Framework is to provide guidance on:

- a standard definition of evidence-informed practice to underpin the menu
- an inclusive approach to different forms of evidence
- guidance on how practices and programs could be identified or submitted to the menu for review, assessment and rating.

Consultation with the Sector

It was critical that the sector had the opportunity to input into the development of the Menu Framework to benefit from their expertise and to ensure that the menu meets their needs. Two rounds of consultation were held with a wide range of child and family service providers and research organisations, including the working groups that report to the Roadmap Implementation Ministerial Advisory Group.

- The first round introduced the project and featured examples of other menus and repositories.
- The second round focused on the proposed Menu Framework recommendations, which were detailed in a discussion paper.

Some of the issues that were raised in the consultations included:

- the need for support for the sector to contribute their own practices and programs to the menu
- the levels of evidence should enable a gradual progression along the rating scale
- further work is needed to develop evidence-informed practices that could be included on the menu.

A number of changes were made to the Menu Framework recommendations based on this feedback.

- The definition of evidence-informed practice (Recommendation 2) has been further adapted from the Institute of Medicine:

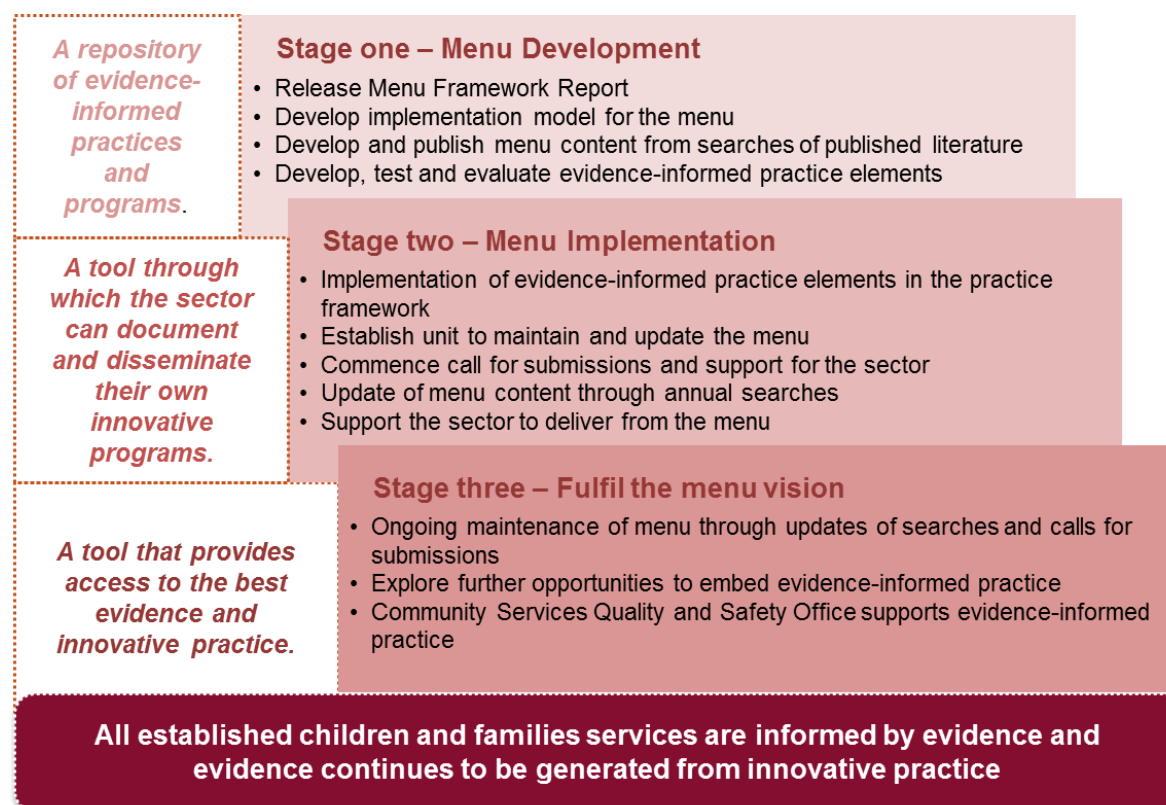
The integration of best research evidence with practice expertise and client values.

- The ‘not rated’ level of evidence for submissions from the sector was changed to ‘logic-informed’ to more accurately describe the requirements of this rating (Recommendation 17).
- An additional level was added to the strength of evidence rating to enable a more gradual progression and an attainable entry point for the sector. The ‘emerging research evidence’ rating will indicate that the ‘logic-informed’ rating has been achieved and that evaluation is underway to meet the ‘promising research evidence’ criteria (Recommendation 17).
- A requirement for commentary was added to the recommendation to include cultural and geographic markers that indicated whether a program had been tested with indigenous or culturally and linguistically diverse populations, in Australia or overseas (Recommendation 19).
- The implementation rating and information will include mandatory program purveyor requirements, where applicable (Recommendation 20).

Stages of development and implementation

The Menu Framework provides guidance and recommendations for the development and maintenance of the menu. These recommendations are designed to create a menu that is developed, and regularly updated, to provide the *best available research evidence*. This means that the menu will contain the latest innovations in child and family services, including practices and programs the sector are delivering to meet the needs of clients.

The development of the menu will be a staged process, as outlined in the following diagram.



Stage one: Develop the menu content from systematic searches of published studies and identification of consistent outcomes measures that are specific to the practices and programs on the menu and align with the Department of Health and Human Services' outcomes framework. In the first instance, the menu will be a repository of practices and programs with useful information about evidence, implementation and cost that will aid decision-making in the sector.

Stage two: Once the menu content has been developed the gaps in practices and programs for particular cohorts or pathways will be identified. The second stage will include calls for submissions to prioritise topic areas that address these gaps. Calls for submissions will be administered, providing templates and guidance for making the submissions. Individual support will be provided to agencies to develop logic models. This will mean that the menu will be a tool by which the sector can document and disseminate their own practices and programs.

Stage three: Establish ongoing maintenance and updates of the menu content and continue to support the sector to contribute and deliver practices and programs on the menu.

Two projects are currently underway that will help embed evidence-informed practice.

- **Development of evidence-informed practices** – the development and implementation of a unified practice framework in child and family services is a unique and valuable opportunity to embed evidence-informed practices in service delivery. These practices could support sustained and meaningful engagement and improve outcomes for vulnerable children and families. The department will work with the Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Welfare to engage the sector in the selection of the evidence-informed practices to be developed and tested, support participating service providers in the testing phase and to share the learnings with the sector.
- **Development of review and assessment criteria for the menu** – to commence the development of the menu content, clear rules on how published studies will be searched and assessed are needed. These rules will be assessed by an expert panel and guide how the menu content is developed and updated.

While the menu content is being developed, the department will continue to implement and test a range of evidence-informed approaches. For example, a number of evidence-based programs in family services are being delivered and rigorously evaluated to determine their transportability to our service system context. While these programs were commissioned by the department because of their high level of evidence, it is important to determine if the commissioned programs deliver the same results to children and families in the Victorian service system. OPEN will be resourced to support and share the learnings that are gained through implementation and delivery.

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