



RACGP
Royal Australian College of General Practitioners

National Drug and Alcohol Education Program

Draft guidelines



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Development of RACGP's draft guidelines

National Drug and Alcohol Education Reference Group

In late May 2019, The Royal Australian College of General Practitioners (RACGP) convened its first National Drug and Alcohol Education (NDAE) Reference Group meeting. The NDAE Reference Group assisted with development of the RACGP's draft program guidelines education schema.

Membership of NDAE Reference Group consists of clinical representation from the following:

- RACGP Education Services
- RACGP Specific Interests, Addiction Medicine network
- RACGP Specific Interests, Custodial Health network
- RACGP Specific Interests, Pain Management network
- RACGP Specific Interests, Psychological Medicine network
- RACPG Rural Council
- RACGP Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Council
- NDAE Program project coordinators
- RACGP faculty representatives on an as-needed basis.

Stakeholder consultation and engagement

With over 40,000 members, the RACGP will now embark on a substantial consultation and stakeholder engagement nationwide. Consultation will take place with internal and external stakeholders, including (but not limited to) the RACGP's Specific Interest networks, faculties and councils; Royal Australian College of Physicians' Addiction Medicine Chapter; Primary Health Networks (PHNs); Pharmacotherapy Area-Based Networks; leading academics and subject matter experts; healthcare education and training providers; and drug and alcohol service providers.

This document will form the basis of the RACGP's consultation and engagement resources. These draft guidelines were developed with the aim that the educational schema:

- is relevant to general practitioners (GPs)
- encourages participation from rural and remote GPs
- assists GPs to treat identified at-risk groups, such as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and lesbian, gay, bi, transgender, queer or intersex (LGBTQI) individuals
- gives GPs choice to access training according to their learning preferences
- has strong educational impact without being onerous to complete
- can be contextualised to local circumstances surrounding drug and alcohol misuse
- uses best practice across the wide range of health domains impacted by drug and alcohol misuse
- complements but does not duplicate the high-quality training currently available to GPs.

Consultation objectives

The primary aim of this consultation is to establish the program's proposed educational offering, and who will receive prioritised access to that training (by way of financial incentive – refer to later discussion under 'Accessing NDAE Program incentive payments'), can be implemented effectively and fairly.

The RACGP is seeking feedback on the following:

- What are the education and treatment priorities in your region (PHN/Local Health District level)?

- The RACGP has fewer than 2000 spaces for this education package. How should it define eligibility criteria for access to the NDAE Program and financial remuneration?
 - Who should have priority access, and why?
- What organisations are delivering drug and alcohol education to GPs in your region?
 - What content is covered?
 - How is it delivered?
 - What costs do GPs incur?
- Do you know of any experienced GPs treating drug and alcohol misuse who might be interested in educating other GPs about the safe prescription of high-risk psychoactives?

Proposed implementation schedule

The RACGP is proposing the following implementation schedule for the NDAE Program.

Consultation and engagement phase closes	30 August 2019
Publication of NDAE Program guidelines	7 October 2019
RACGP member applications to access the program open	30 November 2019
Treatment Skills Training: Pathway no. 1 locations and dates online	30 November 2019
Publication of drug and alcohol resource database	30 November 2019
Essential Skills Training available online	30 November 2019
Treatment Skills Training: Pathway no. 3 small group tele-education sessions commence	28 February 2020
Advanced Skills Training grant applications open	28 February 2020
Treatment Skills Training: Pathway no. 2 content available via <i>gplearning</i>	1 July 2020
Incentive payment applications close	31 April 2021

Proposed education schema

The RACGP will be developing a comprehensive training package for GPs to address drug and alcohol misuse and addiction in their communities. During the course of a working week, every GP will see patients who are experiencing, to some degree or another, problematic drug and/or alcohol use.

In response, the RACGP is intending to develop the NDAE Program so that:

- as many GPs as possible can benefit
- GPs have choice so to access training that best addresses their knowledge gaps
- GPs can access training pathways according to their capacity and interest, from a two- or three-hour online module, through to a full-day face-to-face session or a six-week tele-educational program.

Essential Skills Training

Essential Skills Training will provide a skills update for drug and alcohol consultations. This free training will be accessible online via *gplearning* and potentially via two webinar sessions.

Training will be available for all RACGP members, take approximately 2–3 hours to complete and be accredited for four Category 2 points in the RACGP Continuing Professional Development (CPD) Program.

The educational outcomes for GPs could include:

- having systems and techniques to screen more effectively for drug and alcohol misuse
- being more confident in their approach to asking tricky questions during consults
- using motivational interviewing more effectively
- being confident handling problematic patient behaviour, including patients who are
 - angry, aggressive or agitated
 - in pain
 - demanding medications
 - displaying mental health comorbidities
 - exhibiting self-destructive behaviour
- appropriate referral of patients to their local drug and alcohol service.

At the completion of the NDAE Program, this education activity will serve as one of the program's legacy outcomes, providing free drug and alcohol education for all RACGP members, including general practice registrars.

Treatment Skills Training

Treatment Skills Training is designed for those GPs who would like to gain a more in-depth knowledge of drug and alcohol misuse and treatment options available to GPs. This training can be particularly helpful to GPs in rural and remote areas where local treatment pathways are limited or not readily available.

The RACGP is proposing to develop three Treatment Skills Training pathways to ensure GPs can access education that best meets their needs. It is anticipated that each pathway will take up to eight hours to complete and be accredited for 40 Category 1 points in the CPD Program.

Priority access to Treatment Skills Training will be given to those who apply for the program online and meet the eligibility criteria. The RACGP will seek feedback during consultation to establish appropriate eligibility criteria.

The application process will require applicants to address the program's eligibility criteria, and complete a brief survey and a case-based self-reflection activity.

Treatment Skills Training: Pathway no. 1 – Face-to-face education

Pathway no. 1 is recommended for GPs in metropolitan, regional and more populated rural areas. The pathway uses face-to-face and online formats. Learning outcomes for GPs completing this training pathway could include:

- assessing and diagnosing substance misuse disorder
- providing treatment options for alcohol and drug misuse given the drugs (licit and illicit) most readily available in their local community
- managing increasingly complex patient presentations
- recognising the importance of boundaries and self-care.

It is envisaged that Treatment Skills Training: Pathway no. 1 will be run as a mini-conference. Half of each conference program will have content delivered by accredited general practice drug and alcohol educators, who will deliver training across the country. To ensure each conference is contextualised to a locality, its services, challenges and legislative requirements, the other half of each mini-conference program will use local expertise. This expertise will be drawn from local drug and alcohol services, other appropriate local healthcare services, and local GPs who are experienced in treatment of substance misuse disorder.

Program participants will be required to attend two small group learning sessions at the conference, then complete a post-event reinforcing self-reflection activity. Participants will also have online access to modular content on a range of drug and alcohol treatments via the RACGP's learning management system, *glearning*. Completion of this additional content will be optional.

To safeguard the running of a successful event and ensure sufficient participant numbers, in the weeks prior to training the RACGP may (depending on capacity) open registration to those who did not receive incentive payments but who express interest in part-day or full-day attendance. Subject to local availability and need, participation may also be extended to a cohort of other healthcare workers involved in treatment of drug and alcohol misuse, such as nurse practitioners, practice managers, psychologists, and other alcohol and drug workers.

Table 1. Intensive Skills Training: Pathway no. 1 – Proposed events schedule

State/territory	2020 events	2021 events
NSW/ACT	1 Sydney 1 regional 3 rural	1 Sydney 1 Canberra 1 rural
Vic	1 Melbourne 1 regional 2 rural	1 Melbourne 1 regional 1 rural
Qld	1 Brisbane 1 regional 3 rural	1 Brisbane 1 regional 1 rural
WA	1 Perth 1 regional 3 rural	1 Perth 1 regional 1 rural
SA	1 Adelaide 3 rural	1 Adelaide 1 rural
NT	1 Darwin 3 rural	1 Darwin 1 rural
Tas	1 Hobart 1 rural	1 rural

Treatment Skills Training: Pathway no. 2 – Self-directed learning

Some GPs may already be applying best practice in regard to management of difficult patient behaviours as well as in identifying and assessing substance misuse disorder. These GPs may prefer to prioritise education that broadens and deepens their understanding of specific drug and alcohol treatment options available in the community setting.

Program participants could be required to undertake up to eight hours of structured self-directed learning via *glearning*. Completion of Pathway no. 2 could include completing the following:

- two core modules
- three optional modules
- one tele-education small group session
- pre- and post-training surveys.

Core modules:

- Alcohol and Other Drugs Essential Skills recap
- Identifying needs of at-risk groups (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, LBGTQI etc)

Relevant optional modules:

- Alcohol – One-off risky misuse
- Alcohol – Lifetime risk
- Alcohol – Home detox
- Cannabis
- Cocaine
- Methamphetamines
- Prescription opioids
- Prescription benzodiazepines
- Other illicit drugs
- Poly-drug use
- Mental health comorbidities
- Boundaries and self-care

At the completion of the NDAE Program, this education pathway will serve as one of the program's legacy outcomes. This pathway will remain available to all RACGP members as free, structured, self-directed drug and alcohol education, with ongoing future reviews.

Treatment Skills Training: Pathway no. 3 – Tele-education sessions

Pathway no. 3 is aimed particularly at rural and remote GPs where attendance at a face-to-face session is unfeasible due to distance. Residents in remote regions of Australia are particularly at risk for drug and alcohol misuse. GPs practising in these regions are themselves isolated, treating patients with often complex comorbidities without real-time support from colleagues or experienced allied health professionals in drug and alcohol misuse.

This pathway attempts to provide an educational experience that matches the power of face-to-face learning. The proposed tele-education platform, Project ECHO, was chosen as it provides adequate structure and flexibility to deliver didactic evidence-based content, interactive case-based discussion, and a user experience of feeling supported not just by a mentor but by a network of peers.

This pathway will only be available to incentive payment recipients. Access will be prioritised to rural and remote GPs; if capacity permits, this could be widened to include participants from regional and metropolitan areas. Each Project ECHO session could be capped at a maximum of 20 participants, with a panel of two medical educators.

It is envisaged that participant will be required to attend a minimum of four 1.5-hour tele-education sessions, take part in pre- and post-training surveys and complete self-reflection exercises. Participants will also have online access to modular evidence-based content on a range of drug and alcohol treatments via *gplearning*. Completion of this additional content will be optional.

About Project ECHO

Project ECHO (Extension for Community Healthcare Outcomes) was developed in the United States and is used in over 30 counties to deliver improvements in a wide variety of patient outcomes. Project ECHO is a lifelong learning and guided practice model that extends the reach of medical education and exponentially increases workforce capacity to provide best-practice specialty care and reduce health inequalities.

The heart of the Project ECHO model is its hub-and-spoke knowledge-sharing networks, led by expert teams who use multi-point videoconferencing to conduct virtual clinics. In this way, GPs learn to provide excellent specialty care to patients in their own communities.

Australian providers of health education are increasingly using Project ECHO to deliver systematic improvements to health outcomes.

Advanced Skills Training

Treatment options for experienced practitioners

Advanced Skills Training is for those GPs who wish to undertake advanced training in one element of treatment for drug and alcohol misuse.

Many GPs who already treat particular patients with substance misuse disorder to best-practice standards may still wish to access education that enhances their knowledge and skills in this field.

For example, some GPs may be confident in their skills to treat patients with alcohol misuse, but have little confidence in treating patients who use illicit drugs. Others may occasionally prescribe pharmacotherapies for opioid dependence but have little knowledge of how to treat methamphetamine use or conduct GP-led home detox for alcohol dependency.

To access Advanced Skills Training, the RACGP will consider prior learning and evidence of practice-based experience. RACGP members may be eligible to access this training via one of two entry points.

Entry Point A

Entry Point A would be for recipients of an incentive payment who have successfully completed Treatment Skills Training.

Entry Point B

RACGP members who provide evidence that they are currently treating patients with drug and alcohol misuse, as well as evidence of prior learning in drug and alcohol misuse, may be eligible to apply for an incentive payment and entry into Entry Point B. The RACGP will seek feedback during consultation to establish appropriate eligibility criteria.

Those who wish to access Advanced Skills Training will need to make a separate grant application. Successful applicants will be remunerated for only one Advanced Skills Training activity (refer below). On a case-by-case basis, applicants may be able to undertake a second training activity but will not receive any further incentive payment.

The application process for this training will require applicants to address the eligibility criteria, complete a brief survey and submit a case-based self-reflection activity.

Possible Advanced Skills Training activities

- Completion of an advanced Project ECHO education program
- Completion of an additional Treatment Skills Training pathway
- Completion of training in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Drug and Alcohol
- Introducing GP-led home detox for alcohol dependency (support provided)
- 'Train the Trainer' participation to train GPs at a practice/regional level
- 'Train the Trainer' participation to enhance educational outcomes for supervisors of general practice registrars
- Access to mentoring support for complex cases of poly-drug use

Request for other types of targeted education or support will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Pathways for accessing training and incentive payments for the NDAE Program are summarised in Appendix A.

Accessing NDAE Program incentive payments

The RACGP will establish information-sharing protocols with the Australian College of Rural and Remote Medicine (ACRRM) to ensure that GPs wishing to access an NDAE Program incentive payment will be able to do so only once.

The RACGP will consider requests from RACGP members who would prefer to attend education offered by ACCRM, as well as requests made by ACCRM members who wish to complete the Essential Skills Training or an Intensive Skills Training pathway offered by the RACGP. Accommodating these requests will be made on a case-by-case basis after mutual agreement has been established between ACCRM and the RACGP.

Essential Skills Training

Any RACGP member will automatically be granted free access to complete the Essential Skills Training online module.

The RACGP is considering incentivising GPs to complete this module by offering \$100 for each of the first 500 completions.

Treatment Skills Training

RACGP members who consider that they meet the eligibility criteria will be able to apply for an incentive payment and nominate the Treatment Skills Training pathway they wish to access for free. Approved applicants could be remunerated to the amount of \$1200 for completion of any Treatment Skills Training pathway. Up to 1500 applicants could be remunerated as part of this funding package.

The RACGP invites stakeholders to share their views regarding the eligibility criteria to determine how to prioritise recipients receiving funds. Incentive payment applications will be required for those wanting to register for any of the Treatment Skills Training: Pathway no. 1 events.

Potential eligibility criteria may include that the applicant:

- resides in a rural/remote region of Australia that is more than 500 km from specialist drug and alcohol treatment services (automatic access to Pathway no. 3).
- resides in rural Australia (automatic access to Pathway no. 1)
- has a large portion of patients who reside in an area of identified socioeconomic disadvantage (automatic access to Pathway no. 1 or Pathway no. 2)
- treats a high proportion of patients who identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander (automatic access to Pathway no. 1 or Pathway no. 2)
- treats a high proportion of patients who identify as LGBTQI (automatic access to Pathway no. 1 or Pathway no. 2)
- is nominated by their practice to share their education with colleagues
- is looking for CPD to treat patients with more complex presentations
- provides evidence to substantiate need (eg provides two relevant case examples and an explanation of how they would like to improve their practice as a result of participation in the training).

Advanced Skills Training

A significant proportion of the federal government grant received by the RACGP will be set aside to provide access for RACGP members who wish to complete a more advanced education program on one element of treatment for drug and alcohol misuse.

The eligibility criteria for this program will be based on ability to evidence prior learning, evidence of current treatment of patients with drug and alcohol misuse, and clearly identified personal learning objectives with case-based self-reflections.

The RACGP has provisionally set aside allocations of up to \$2500 for each of the first 400 successful Advanced Skill Training applicants.

The RACGP will look to commission education to be delivered by appropriate third parties according to the educational needs of grant applicants.

Contact

For more information about these draft guidelines for the RACGP's NDAE Program, please contact:

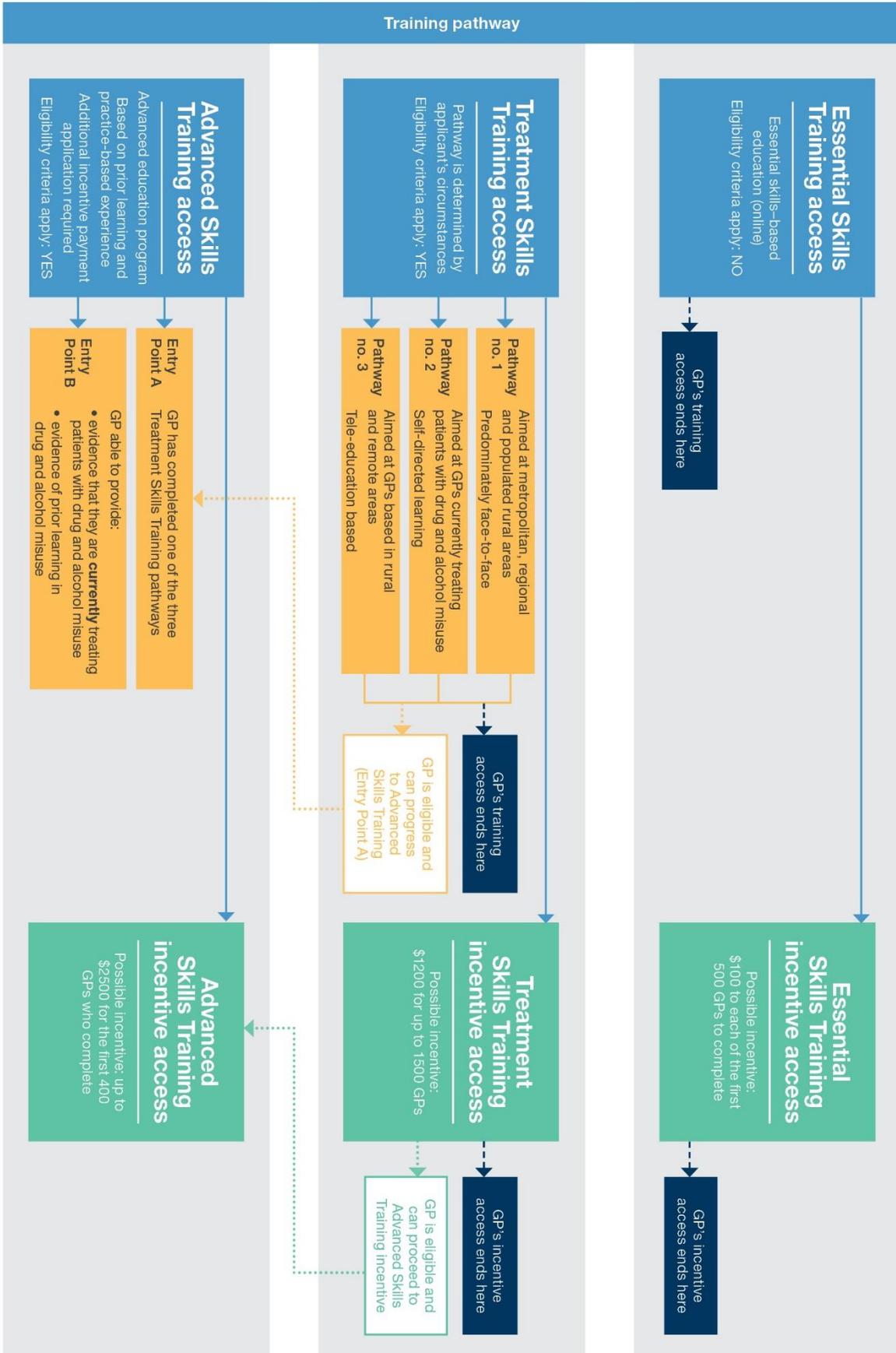
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Appendix A: NDAE Program training and incentive payments



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Disclaimer

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We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the lands and seas on which we work and live, and pay our respects to Elders, past, present and future.



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