



Supporting Recovery Through Quality of Life Conversations with Your Team

Talking Points for Clinical Managers and Leaders

*These talking points focus on quality of life (QOL) assessments for persons living with mental health or substance use challenges as part of a **recovery-focused approach**. The **goal** is to have adult clients at community mental health (CMH) centres complete the World Health Organization QOL (WHOQOL) assessment.*

*These prompts can support healthcare managers and leaders in **team conversations** with clinical practice leaders, clinical coordinators, clinical educators, and healthcare providers (HCPs).*

Why WHOQOL?

QOL assessments are tools that explore what matters most to people about health, well-being, and healthcare experiences. They help support people in living their best life possible. The WHOQOL assesses well-being in physical, psychological, social, and environmental areas.

- It is one of the few assessment tools currently used in CMH that captures the client's voice.
- Using tools like the WHOQOL, healthcare providers and clients work together to help make recovery plans that reflect **what is most important and relevant to the individual**.
- Using QOL assessment tools has been shown to guide meaningful conversations, foster empowerment, enhance participation, and align with person-centred care.
- A **combined purpose**, at the population level (local mental health centres and regionally), is to demonstrate accountability for person-centred care, contribute to broader service planning, identify health system priorities, and optimize quality improvement initiatives.

What to do?

- Encourage consistent use of WHOQOL by highlighting its value in everyday care.
- Address common concerns about the tool openly and supportively.
- Coach clinical coordinators to build confidence and assist staff with integration.
- Promote a team culture of openness, curiosity, and understanding.
- Avoid blame when challenges arise—focus on collaborative problem-solving.
- Acknowledge time pressures and validate staff concerns about workload.
- Create space for feedback and dialogue.
- Model empathy and flexibility in response to workflow challenges.
- Celebrate successes and share examples of WHOQOL making a difference.

Together, let's focus on what matters most to persons with lived experience.

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and find additional resources and supporting evidence.

Common Concerns

Completing tools like the WHOQOL can feel time-consuming or challenging, especially in busy settings. If concerns arise, take time to discuss them with your team. As necessary, provide clinical direction and support to the team.

1 Concerns from clients about the relevance of QOL assessment tools for recovery and treatment.

CONCERN	MANAGER TALKING POINT & ACTIONS
<p>My client doesn't like it. It feels to intrusive</p> <p>Clients find the questions uncomfortable or too personal.</p>	<p>Explain the Purpose Clearly</p> <p>It is one of the few assessment tools currently used in CMH that captures the client's voice. Help clients see how QOL assessments support recovery and can create a safe, respectful space to share.</p> <p>Supporting clients in understanding why QOL assessments matter can lead to more honest responses and reduce feelings of discomfort or shame.</p>
<p>It's not suitable for my client</p> <p>The client is not ready. It doesn't fit their current situation.</p>	<p>Be Patient and Flexible</p> <p>Adjust timing and approach based on client comfort and trust.</p> <p>Tailor the Process</p> <p>A one-size-fits-all approach doesn't work—adjust approach, pace, and focus to fit each client. For example, introduce it gradually, focus on just a few items, or use it conversationally rather than formally.</p>
<p>My client isn't engaging with it</p> <p>The client doesn't see the value or feel disconnected.</p>	<p>Lead with Curiosity and Care</p> <p>Use QOL assessment tools to spark meaningful conversations—client participation grows when HCPs are positive and genuinely interested.</p> <p>Use the WHOQOL as a conversation starter—frame it as a way to understand and support the client's journey, not just a task to complete.</p> <p>While most will complete the assessment, not every client will be ready to engage with the tool right away. It's okay to pause, revisit later, or adapt the approach based on client comfort level while keeping the therapeutic relationship central.</p>
<p>My client has concerns about how the information will be used</p> <p>Clients worry about how their answers will be used, how it may affect services, or lead to unwanted actions.</p>	<p>Focus on Support, Not Scores</p> <p>Reassure clients that their responses help HCPs to understand their perspective and guide recovery planning, not judge or make decisions based on scores. The results can provide valuable information that gives a fuller picture to support individualized recovery and treatment.</p> <p>Interpreting the QOL assessment results involves a continuous two-way conversation between providers and clients. It involves reflecting on the answers together, exploring what it means in the context of the client's goals, and adjusting recovery plans as needed.</p>

2 Concerns about the time pressures, workload, and workflow disruptions that can occur with the routine use of QOL assessment tools.

CONCERN	MANAGER TALKING POINT & ACTIONS
<p>Time Constraints</p> <p>Limited time is available during appointments.</p> <p>QOL assessments often feel time-consuming.</p> <p>Some clients may not be able to complete the WHOQOL during one session due to time, energy, or literacy barriers.</p>	<p>Start Small and Be Adaptable</p> <p>Recognize HCP demands and engage in dialogue to understand time pressures to provide targeted clinical support and direction.</p> <p>For example, encourage gradual use with one or two clients to build comfort with the process and adapt it to the HCP's workflow.</p> <p>Offer options like reading QOL assessment questions aloud, completing them together over multiple sessions, or having clients take it home and return it later.</p>
<p>Increased Workload</p> <p>Added documentation and follow-up tasks in already busy environments.</p>	<p>Integrate, Don't Add On</p> <p>Look for ways to align QOL assessment tools with existing recovery planning to reduce duplication and streamline documentation.</p>
<p>Usability and Fit</p> <p>The WHOQOL isn't user-friendly or clinically relevant.</p> <p>Uptake by clients is low.</p>	<p>Create Space for Feedback</p> <p>Invite HCP input to improve usability and tailor implementation to the local centre.</p> <p>Client participation grows when HCPs are positive, show genuine interest, and take time to review results with clients.</p>
<p>It takes too long to learn</p> <p>HCPs feel overwhelmed by the time it takes to fully grasp and use the tool effectively.</p>	<p>Offer Quick-Start Resources</p> <p>Provide brief guides, peer tips, or short demonstrations to help HCPs get started without feeling overloaded.</p> <p>To share tips and support practice, use available resources, such as the WHOQOL Quick User Guide, Learning Hub course, or have clinical coordinators host informal implementation meetings.</p>
<p>Documentation is onerous</p> <p>Transferring paper WHOQOL responses into PARIS takes extra time and adds administrative burden.</p>	<p>Let the System do the Work</p> <p>The paper form is designed with color coding of each section to reduce the burden of scoring.</p> <p>Highlight that PARIS automatically generates score totals once data is entered.</p> <p>Support the use of digital formats where possible and explore ways to streamline data entry—such as clerical support or batch documentation.</p>
<p>Workflow Disruptions</p> <p>The WHOQOL may not fit current systems or processes.</p>	<p>Adapt Timing and Format</p> <p>Adapt timing based on the needs of clients and expertise of HCPs.</p> <p>A one-size-fits-all doesn't work—discuss minor adjustments to fit the local centre.</p>

3 Concerns about how QOL assessment results (e.g., completion rates) are used at the population level (local centres and regional level).

CONCERN	MANAGER TALKING POINT & ACTIONS
<p>Evaluate performance</p> <p>Healthcare providers worry that QOL assessment results might be used to monitor their performance.</p>	<p>Clarify the Purpose</p> <p>Reinforce that the purpose of QOL assessment tools is to support individualized, person-centred decisions about recovery and treatment.</p>
<p>Unclear Value of Dashboards</p> <p>Healthcare providers may feel like “just another form.” Some are unclear about the reasons for having QOL assessment results available on clinical dashboards.</p>	<p>Reinforce the Shared Vision</p> <p>Explain how QOL assessment results are tracked over time and displayed on dashboards to highlight trends, gaps, and opportunities for services and programs at both the local centres and the regional level.</p> <p>Emphasize that results are for the evaluation of services and programs, not the provider, to meet the needs of persons with mental health or substance use challenges.</p>
<p>Lack of Feedback Loop</p> <p>Healthcare providers may feel like “it won’t make any difference.” They rarely see how their consistent collection of QOL assessments influences population-level decisions or system improvements.</p>	<p>Provide Outcomes Regularly</p> <p>Share how QOL assessment results can be used to inform programs, policies, or resource decisions to show their impact—emphasize that this insight builds over time as completion rates grow.</p> <p>Facilitate team discussions on client needs identified through QOL assessments (e.g., housing, finances, additional resources, and other psychosocial rehabilitation groups). As necessary, provide clinical support and direction to the team to meet these needs.</p> <p>This process can serve as a platform for clients to identify and express their needs, enabling the system to respond with informed program improvements.</p>
<p>Fear of Misuse</p> <p>Concerns that QOL assessment results rates may be used for cost-cutting or limiting service eligibility.</p>	<p>Promote Transparency and Connect to the Bigger Picture</p> <p>Clarify that QOL assessment results are used to enhance care—not limit—care. The results help us understand and demonstrate the needs of individual seeking services at both local and regional levels.</p> <p>Discuss how regularly collecting QOL assessment results over time gives decision-makers a clearer understanding of what clients need, helping guide funding, policy, and resource decisions that directly impact the services we provide.</p>

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