



Government of Western Australia
Mental Health Commission



Clinical Pathway for Referral of Clients to Next Step Inpatient Withdrawal Unit (IPWU)

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Introduction

Next Step's Inpatient Withdrawal Unit (IPWU) is a 17 bed unit located at East Perth, which provides a specialist service for people requiring inpatient medical and nursing care during alcohol or other drug withdrawal. The IPWU is not an acute psychiatric or medical facility and has minimal staffing levels after hours and weekends.

Admissions

All admissions require a referral and are categorised into two types.

Elective or Booked Admissions

Elective admission is offered to clients for withdrawal from alcohol, opiates, amphetamines, and cannabis. Admission priority is given to pregnant women, Aboriginal people and people who live in rural and remote areas. Elective admissions are booked from Monday to Friday and clients are required to arrive at the service in the morning at their scheduled time (between 9am and 10am).

Emergency Admissions

Hospitals, Emergency Departments and Next Step East Perth are given admission priority for clients presenting in acute alcohol withdrawal. Where possible these clients will be offered a five to seven day admission on the day of referral. Emergency admissions are required to arrive at the service prior to 3pm.

1. Elective Admissions

Elective admissions are received from a range of services including Metro and Country Community Drug and Alcohol Services, other drug and alcohol treatment services, community pharmacotherapy prescribers, rural health services, GP's, Department of Child Protection and Family Support, Department of Corrective Services, mental health services, Aboriginal health services and other healthcare services.

Admission Considerations

The decision to admit a client is made following a comprehensive medical, psychosocial and risk assessment that takes into consideration:

- Client intention and motivation.
- Evidence of dependent drug use that includes tolerance and withdrawal.
- Medical and psychiatric conditions including suicide risk.
- Recent serious suicide attempt.
- Pain issues and treatment.
- Previous withdrawal and treatment history.
- Current level of intoxication.
- Social and home circumstances.
- Evidence of relapse prevention and post withdrawal plan.
- Current occupancy in IPWU.
- Admissions cannot be offered to clients with current Next Step Behaviour Managements Plans that excludes them from admission.

Other Considerations

- Clients from rural areas should be supported by the referrer with making travel arrangements **to and from** the IPWU and an exit plan should they not complete the detox. This may include accessing the WA Country Health Service - Patient Assisted Travel Scheme.
- The IPWU is strictly smoke free with no exceptions. Nicotine replacement therapy (NRT) will be provided to clients for the duration of their admission.
- The IPWU has a no visiting policy.
- There is no internet access and no access permitted to personal mobile phones or any smart devices.
- Attendance at external appointments during admission is not permitted and this includes court attendance.
- A client's planned date of admission may be postponed if the client presents on the day in an acutely intoxicated state, which cannot be managed within the unit.

Continuity of Care & Discharge Plans

All elective admissions should have a work up prior to referral that includes a relapse prevention and post withdrawal plan that has been arranged in consultation with both the client and the referrer. If the client has a follow up plan that includes residential rehabilitation they should contact the rehabilitation services and have this in place with a bed approved prior to referral to the IPWU.

Length of Stay

Length of stay for an inpatient withdrawal will be decided on an individual basis and determined on clinical need. The average length of stay is dependent on the substance as indicated in table below, but may be extended depending on clinical needs.

Withdrawal of Substances and Average Duration of IPWU Stay

Substance	No. Days	Substance use levels accepted for IPWU
Alcohol	7	Dependent use, no upper limit, with or without seizure history.
Cannabis	7	Dependent use, no upper limit.
Amphetamine	7	Dependent use, no upper limit.
Methadone (Opioid Substitution Treatment only)	14	Clients should reduce to 20mgs or less per day for seven days prior to admission.
Buprenorphine (Opioid Substitution Treatment only)	14	Clients should reduce to 8mgs or less per day for seven days prior to admission.
Opioid Substitution Treatment Induction	3 - 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complex, high risk induction e.g. benzodiazepine dependence, polysubstance use. Failed inductions in the community.
Opioid Substitution Treatment – Transfers (methadone to buprenorphine)	2 - 3	Methadone (of more than 30mg per day) to buprenorphine transfer may be considered for IPWU admission on a case by case basis with consultant approval.
Benzodiazepine Transfers/stabilisation	4 - 7	Clients on high doses of 40mgs or more per day of diazepam or equivalent.
EXCEPTIONS		
Opiates (Illicit and over the counter)	Contact Service	Generally an opioid substitution treatment program should be considered as first line treatment, exceptions may be considered for IPWU admission on a case by case basis with a robust discharge plan and IPWU consultant approval.
Benzodiazepine Withdrawal	Contact Service	Generally, clients with benzodiazepine dependence should continue a planned gradual reduction to cessation, under medical supervision in an outpatient setting. Clients that have been reduced to 10mgs (equivalent of diazepam) or less per day for a minimum of 7 days prior to admission, may be considered for admission on a case by case basis with consultant approval.

Admission is not offered to Clients

- Requiring specialist medical, surgical or psychiatric care during the length of their stay.
- With unstable mental health.
- With current abusive, violent behaviour that does not respond to staff interventions to moderate the behaviour.
- With a current Next Step Behaviour Management Plan that excludes admission.
- Requesting admission with motivation other than withdrawal treatment (e.g. accommodation, respite, refuge).

- Aged less than 18 years. These clients should be referred to the Drug and Alcohol Youth Service (DAYS) for further assessment and support.

Admission Procedure

Referrers can contact the IPWU Clinical Nurse Specialist (92191819), to discuss the referral and obtain referral paperwork.

Required Documentation

➤ Metropolitan Community Alcohol and Drug Services (CADS):

All referrers from Metro CADS should complete the following forms:

[IPWU NS MR 18 - INTERNAL IPWU REFERRAL](#) (printed on pink paper)

[IPWU NS MR 012 - CLIENT CONTRACT](#)

And forward a current completed copy of the following forms:

[NS MR 084 - AUTHORITY TO RELEASE AND OBTAIN INFORMATION & NS MR 085 - PRIVACY STATEMENT](#)

Where an *Integrated Services* client is under care of a doctor, the medical assessment section (NS MR 103 INTERNAL IPWU REFERRAL FORM) should also be completed. Additional relevant documentation such as management plans for identified mental health problems, physical health problems (chronic pain, incontinence, etc.) and behavioural concerns are required with the referral form. The NS MR 235 is an example management plan and other coping plans that can be used to record the clients agreed plan (see attachment 6 to 9).

All referrers should sent the documentation to the IPWU CNS at Next Step by email:

NextStep.IPWU@mhc.wa.gov.au or fax: 9219 1885 admission dates cannot be confirmed without receipt and assessment of all referral documents.

➤ Other Services:

All referrers from other services should complete the following forms:

[IPWU NS MR 017 - EXTERNAL REFERRAL](#)

[IPWU NS MR 012 - CLIENT CONTRACT](#)

[NS MR 084 - AUTHORITY TO RELEASE AND OBTAIN INFORMATION & NS MR 085 - PRIVACY STATEMENT](#)

All referrers should sent the documentation to the IPWU CNS at Next Step by email:

NextStep.IPWU@mhc.wa.gov.au or fax: 9219 1885 admission dates cannot be confirmed without receipt and assessment of all referral documents.

Screening Process for Referrals

Admission to the IPWU will be decided following an assessment of the referral information by the IPWU CNS and the IPWU Consultant where required. The client will be contacted by the IPWU CNS within two working days of receipt of documentation to discuss referral. The outcome of this assessment will be communicated to the referring clinician/agency within three working days. If the client is assessed as not appropriate for admission the referrer will be advised and alternatives may be explored with them.

Where the CNS team is unable to contact the client after 3 attempts, they will contact the referrer for the referrer to follow up with the client. The referral will be put on hold, awaiting contact from the referrer or the client and closed if no contact after one month.

Information to be provided to client prior to admission:

- **IPWU Client Admission Information Brochure**
- **Copy Of Relevant Coping Tools**

2. Emergency Admissions

Emergency admissions for alcohol dependent clients can be received from all metro emergency departments and holding wards seven days per week.

Clients must be in acute alcohol withdrawal. Clients must also be assessed as medically and psychiatrically suitable for discharge home (other than requiring alcohol withdrawal treatment). Where possible these clients will be offered an admission on the day of referral.

Clients presenting with acute mental health risks including a significant drug overdose in the previous 48 hours will not be considered for admission. Chronically suicidal patients with a recent serious suicide attempt should preferably have withdrawal treatment provided in a mental health unit. Next Step can provide clinical consultation if required.

Admissions cannot be offered to clients with current Next Step Behaviour Managements Plans that excludes them from admission.

Pregnant clients not in alcohol withdrawal but with a substance use disorder may be referred to Next Step Outpatient Service, East Perth and Metro Community Drug and Alcohol Services during business hours for immediate review and priority assessment.

All other clients not in alcohol withdrawal but with a substance use disorder should be encouraged to access support through their local Community Alcohol and Drug Services during business hours.

Emergency Department and Holding Wards

Referral Criteria

- Clients must be alcohol dependent and in acute alcohol withdrawal.
- Potential admissions must have no significant acute medical or psychiatric problems that require hospital care.
 - For clients with significant medical issues, in addition to their alcohol withdrawal, medical clearance for discharge home by an ED doctor is required.

- For clients with significant mental health issues, in addition to their alcohol withdrawal, psychiatric clearance for discharge home by a Psychiatrist or Psychiatric Registrar is required.
- For clients with chronic or acute pain issues a pain management plan needs to be developed with the client.
- Clients must be fully oriented, behaviourally settled and cooperative.
- Clients who are currently acutely intoxicated will not be accepted.
- Clients must be generally capable of self-care and independently mobile. Being wheelchair bound is not a barrier to admission if this is the client's normal level of mobility.
- Other disabilities will be considered before client is admitted to determine whether the IPWU is capable of meeting their needs.
- Client has agreed and is motivated to an admission to the IPWU, and had agreed to the IPWU contract (signed copy sent with referral documentation).

N.B There should be no intravenous lines or indwelling catheters (unless permanent) as these indicate that acute medical treatment is required.

Referral Process

During business hours (09:00–16:00 Monday–Friday)

Emergency Departments/Hospital should discuss referrals and send required documentation directly with the IPWU CNS before the admission can be assessed and confirmed. The CNS can be contacted on Ph: 9219 1819, fax: 9219 1885 Email: NextStep.IPWU@mhc.wa.gov.au

After hours (Weekends, after hour and public holidays)

Emergency Departments or Hospital should call the IPWU shift coordinator on Ph: 9219 1851 to establish bed availability and discuss referrals directly. The required documentation must be sent before the referral can be assessed and admission confirmed. The IPWU shift coordinator will discuss the referral with the on call doctor who may contact the referrer for further information if required.

Fax: 9219 1885

Required Documentation

All hospital and emergency department referrers should complete the following forms:

- Clinical notes with medical/psychiatric clearance to home documented.
- Observation charts
- Medication charts
- Blood results,
- Alcohol Withdrawal Chart or CIWAr including BAL
- [IPWU NS MR 012 – Client Contract](#) signed by client
- Mental health assessment screen (if applicable)

Transferring the Client to IPWU

- Client emergency admissions are accepted between 9am and 3pm on a daily basis. If a hospital is unable to transfer the client before 3pm arrangements can be made to accept the client for admission the next day, provided they remain as a patient within the referring hospital until transfer.

- Clients must be a direct transfer from the referral source; and will be breathalysed on arrival.
- Clients should be supplied with seven days' supply of discharge medication as Next Step only stocks withdrawal specific medications.

Other Considerations

Prior to their referral clients need to be made aware that:-

- The IPWU is smoke free and if required Nicotine Replacement Therapy (NRT) will be provided to clients for the duration of their admission
- The IPWU has a no visiting policy.
- There is no internet access and no access to personal mobile phones or any smart devices for the duration of their IPWU stay.
- Attendance at external appointments during admission is not permitted this includes court attendance.
- For homeless clients accommodation referral to a suitable accommodation provider completed before transfer.
- Attendance at external appointments during admission is not permitted this includes court attendance.
- For homeless client's accommodation referral to a suitable accommodation provider completed before transfer.

Useful RESOURCES

- [IPWU NS MR 018 - INTERNAL REFERRAL](#)
- [IPWU NS MR 017 - EXTERNAL REFERRAL](#)
- [IPWU NS MR 012 - CLIENT CONTRACT](#)
- [NS MR 084 - AUTHORITY TO RELEASE AND OBTAIN INFORMATION & NS MR 085 - PRIVACY STATEMENT](#)
- [IPWU NS MR 015 - EXAMPLE MANAGEMENT PLAN](#)
- [IPWU NS MR 016 - SELF-HARM ASSESSMENT & COPING TIPS](#)
- [IPWU NS MR 005 - ANXIETY ASSESSMENT & STRATEGIES TO MANAGE](#)
- [IPWU NS MR 006 - COPING WITH ANGER & AGGITATION TOOL](#)

If you require any of the above resources please contact the CNS on 9219 1819.



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Next Step is committed to equity and providing an inclusive service where individuals feel accepted, safe, affirmed and celebrated; irrespective of cultural or linguistic background, sexual orientation, gender identity, intersex status, religious or spiritual beliefs, socio-economic status, age or abilities.

