

SUPPORTING SAFE SOCIAL MEDIA PRACTICE BY CONSUMERS AND SERVICE PROVIDERS

P AIKEN¹

¹UnitingCare ReGen, Melbourne, Vic

Introduction / Issues: Since ReGen's 2010 exploratory study highlighted organisational opposition to social media use within the Victorian AOD sector, increasing engagement with social media by AOD organisations, individual workers and consumers has created a range of opportunities for service engagement, advocacy and research. However, as in any area of emerging practice, inconsistent approaches and understandings of safe practice create inherent risks.

ReGen's 2013 survey of social media use by people who use AOD services found the great majority had concerns about possible impacts of their online activity on their privacy, but that this did not deter them from posting about AOD issues. While interactions with consumers via service providers' official social media accounts are becoming increasingly common, there has been little work done within the Australian AOD sector to develop practice guidelines and ensure the maintenance of service providers' duty of care to consumers within this area of emerging practice.

Method / Approach: ReGen has undertaken an ongoing review of its social media policy, practice and engagement with consumers through its website and social media accounts. The agency is currently undertaking online surveys for AOD workers and consumers (promoted through sector networks and ReGen's website and social media accounts); workshops with ReGen consumers and staff; & sector consultations.

Discussions and Conclusions: The workshop will include presentation of ReGen's findings and the agency's practice guidelines developed through the consumer and staff consultations.

Implications for Practice or Policy: As in all areas of clinical practice, risk is present in consumer engagement via social media, but can be effectively managed by experienced service providers. The workshop will discuss the application of clinical practice principles to social media activity and opportunities for service providers to develop considered, organisational approaches that protect the safety of consumers and staff.

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