

## What is PACER?

PACER stands for 'Police, Ambulance and Clinician Early Response'. It is a mental health program run in partnership between ACT Policing, the ACT Ambulance Service (ACTAS) and Canberra Health Services (CHS). The PACER team consists of a police officer, paramedic and mental health clinician working together in the same vehicle to respond to, assess and help people of all ages experiencing a mental health crisis in the community. Features of the program include:

- going quickly to mental health-related incidents in the community, including being able to be the first service to respond
- working with the person, family members, carers, and other supports to assess their mental health, make plans and decisions
- sharing of necessary information between the team members, following each agency's policy and relevant laws
- quick and appropriate referrals for further mental health support through CHS or mental health support services in the community

The paramedic is there to assess and treat any physical health emergencies. The police officer is there to make sure the PACER team, the person, and the community are kept safe. The mental health clinician is there to assess mental health needs and support the person in crisis.

## What is the PACER Proof-of-Concept and how does it work?

The PACER Proof-of-Concept is a commitment by ACT Policing, ACTAS and CHS to test the PACER model within the ACT and this started in December 2019. PACER runs from 2pm to 12am, seven days a week. During those hours, there is one PACER unit staffed by a police officer, a paramedic and a mental health clinician.

**You cannot contact or refer to PACER directly.**

PACER is not a team the community or health providers can refer to. It is a responsive, multi-agency, acute mental health intervention service for cases that are typically referred to ACT Policing and/or ACTAS. ACT Policing review referrals to assess for multiple factors, such as mental health concerns, urgency of response, the degree of risk concerning harm to self and others, physical health concerns, existing involvement with CHS, and whether a PACER response would be helpful. The assessment determines whether, when, and how PACER, police, ambulance and/or CHS will respond.

If you need mental health help, please call Access Mental Health on 1800 629 354 or (02) 6205 1065. Access Mental Health offer mental health services that are available 24

hours a day, 7 days a week. These services give you access to assessment, treatment, advice and information on a range of mental health issues.

In a life-threatening emergency, at any time of day or night, always dial Emergency Triple Zero (000) for police, fire or ambulance or attend the nearest Emergency Department.

## How does PACER compare to other mental health emergency programs based in the community?

Other places in Australia and around the world have seen a range of benefits from programs like PACER. We expect that the PACER program in the ACT will bring:

- faster access to mental health assessment, help, and links to appropriate community supports for people who are experiencing a mental health crisis
- fewer people being taken to hospital against their will, acknowledging that people may still be brought to hospital voluntarily or involuntarily if they cannot safely be provided with support in the community
- more efficient use of health, police and ambulance services where a multi-agency response is needed.

## Where can I find out more and provide feedback about PACER?

The PACER management team will be conducting community forums and providing updates to the community as the PACER Proof of Concept continues. We welcome your feedback about PACER. All feedback will be considered in our evaluation process.

If you have any questions or would like more information about PACER, please contact:

Mental Health, Emergency, Ambulance & Police Collaboration  
Adult Community Mental Health Services  
GPO Box 825, Canberra City 2601  
Ph: (02) 5124 1096

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