

National Core Competencies for Aboriginal  
and/or Torres Strait Islander Diabetes Health  
Workers and Diabetes Health Practitioners



## ADEA National Core Competencies for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Diabetes Health Workers and Diabetes Health Practitioners

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## Executive Summary

The National Core Competencies for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Health Workers and Health Practitioners have been developed by the Australian Diabetes Educators Association (ADEA) in 2017. The competencies have been researched and developed in collaboration with the Project Advisory Group. Other professional bodies and consumers were engaged to ascertain the roles, training, base qualifications and competencies of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Health Workers and Health Practitioners. Consideration has been given to the skills, knowledge and competencies required to provide culturally appropriate diabetes education.

The publication of these core competencies signals a clear commitment on the part of ADEA in supporting Indigenous communities to better health outcomes, improving the lives of Indigenous people affected by diabetes and recognising and enhancing the role of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Health Workers and Health Practitioners.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are almost four times more likely to have diabetes or pre-diabetes than non-Indigenous, and diabetes was found to be more than double in remote areas (21%) compared with non-remote areas (9%) (1). Type 2 diabetes is a significant contributor to morbidity and mortality rates for Indigenous adults.

Clear and transparent processes and standards have been established for identifying what should be expected of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Health Workers and Health Practitioners and what should be expected by their clients, peers and employers. These standards align with other relevant standards for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Health Workers and Health Practitioners. Qualifications assessed and compared in the process to develop diabetes competency standards were:

- Certificate III in Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islanders Primary Health Care
- Certificate IV in Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islanders Primary Health Care
- Certificate IV in Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islanders Primary Health Care (Practice)
- Diploma in Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islanders Primary Health Care
- Diploma in Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islanders Primary Health Care (Practice)
- Enrolled Nursing.

This document provides a framework for guiding policy on the diabetes training of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Health Workers and Health Practitioners for the next three years.

The process, structure and expected outcomes of diabetes education have been clearly articulated for health professionals (2) (3). In an era of burgeoning chronic disease and a focus on the central role of the person with diabetes in managing their condition, the integral role of diabetes self-management education has been clearly identified as a core component of effective diabetes care systems. These competency standards reflect the scope of practice for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Health Workers and Health Practitioners and cover the following domains:

- Clinical Practice
- Education and Counselling
- Research and Quality Improvement
- Management and Administration

- Leadership and Advocacy

## Keywords

Credentialed Diabetes Educators (CDE)

Core Competencies

Competency Standards

Continuing Professional Development (CPD)

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## Disclaimer

The information set out in this publication is current at the date of first publication. It is not exhaustive of this subject matter. This document is a guide to practice and cannot by itself guarantee discharge of duty of care owed to patients and support people.

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## About ADEA

The Australian Diabetes Educators Association (ADEA) is the peak national organisation for multidisciplinary health professionals who are committed to the provision and excellence of quality, evidence-based diabetes education, care and management with over 2,100 members working in all sectors and across all locations.

ADEA aims to improve the health and wellbeing of people with diabetes by:

1. providing a credentialling program that establishes standards for the qualifications, skills, knowledge and experience for diabetes educators
2. supporting multidisciplinary health professionals through its various programs, including mentoring, education and research
3. developing and updating relevant policies, standards of practice and clinical guidelines
4. advocating for equitable access for all people affected by diabetes to best practice diabetes education and care services.

For more information, visit our website at [www.adea.com.au](http://www.adea.com.au).

## Key Definitions

**Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Diabetes Health Worker and Diabetes Health Practitioner:** The proposed terms for health professionals that meet the core competencies as outlined in this document.

**Competency:** can be defined as “the state of having the knowledge, judgement, skills, energy, experience and motivation to respond adequately to the demands of one’s professional responsibility” (4).

**Competency standards:** are a set of benchmarks used to assess the skills and knowledge of a person. They are used as a basis for defining learning outcomes and assesses performance within a professional practice. They specify knowledge and skill, and the application of that knowledge and skill, in the workplace.

**Continuing Professional Development (CPD)** is how health practitioners maintain, improve and broaden their knowledge, expertise and competence, and develop the personal and professional qualities required throughout their professional lives (5).

**Scope of practice:** the procedures, actions and processes in which a health professional is authorised, educated and competent to perform (6).

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## 1. Introduction

The Australian Diabetes Educators Association (ADEA) was formed in 1981 and is the leading Australian organisation for health care professionals providing diabetes education and care.

The ADEA is committed to development and continuous improvement of professional standards to ensure optimal person centred service provision for people living with diabetes.

Diabetes self-management education with clinical care should be a part of a therapeutic intervention to promote physical, social, spiritual and psychological wellbeing.

## 2. Key aims of this document

The key aims of this document is to:

- define the minimum competencies required by ADEA for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Diabetes Health Workers and Diabetes Health Practitioners.
- provide Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Health Workers and Health Practitioners with a framework for identifying their own professional development and practice needs in order to meet requirements for recognition as an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Diabetes Health Worker or Diabetes Health Practitioner
- describe the performance standards consumers and employers can expect of an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Diabetes Health Worker or Diabetes Health Practitioner.

## 3. Role and Scope of practice of an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Diabetes Health Worker and Diabetes Health Practitioner

### Definition of an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Diabetes Health Worker and Diabetes Health Practitioner

The designation Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Diabetes Health Worker and Diabetes Health Practitioner identifies those people who demonstrate they meet the standards for diabetes education within their scope of practice. The use of this designation will assist employers, colleagues and patients in understanding the specialist role of those who have achieved it. It provides recognition of evidence based practice in diabetes and a higher level of clinical knowledge.

‘Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Diabetes Health Worker or Diabetes Health Practitioner’ is the nationally recognised title recommended for the quality assured provision of diabetes education at a minimum Cert 4 Level. It is a specialty area of practice that is both a therapeutic and educational intervention.

Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Diabetes Health Workers and Diabetes Health Practitioners are required to adopt a person centred approach when providing diabetes self-management and education to those living with diabetes to allow individuals to:

- develop the knowledge, skills and confidence for the everyday management of diabetes
- understand their personal health risks



- explore the meaning and implications of these risks in the context of personal, social and cultural influences and in terms of current lifestyle behaviours
- activate the determination of a comprehensive self-management plan that will maximise health outcomes.

#### 4. Core Competency Domains for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Diabetes Health Workers and Diabetes Health Practitioners

Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Diabetes Health Workers and Diabetes Health Practitioners may work in a variety of practice settings within Indigenous communities, and work in roles that span the intervention and care continuum. Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Diabetes Health Workers and Diabetes Health Practitioners is underpinned by a core body of knowledge, skills and activity in the following domains:

- Clinical Practice
- Education and Counselling
- Research and Quality Improvement
- Management and Administration
- Leadership and Advocacy

Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Diabetes Health Workers and Diabetes Health Practitioners have a duty of care to ensure they acquire and maintain the requisite knowledge and competence to enable them to perform their role safely, effectively and in a manner that supports optimal outcomes for all Indigenous people with, or at risk of developing, diabetes.

In order to do this an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Diabetes Health Worker and Diabetes Health Practitioner should demonstrate how they:

- apply knowledge and understanding of best practice treatment, management and care of people with prediabetes and diabetes.
- apply evidence based education and self-management techniques to improve outcomes for people with prediabetes and diabetes.
- contribute to research and quality improvement to build the evidence base to support improvements in self-management prediabetes and diabetes education and care.
- apply principles of program management to contribute to the safe, effective and efficient delivery of diabetes services that supports successful self-management of prediabetes and diabetes
- provide expertise and leadership within the health profession and advocate for best practice diabetes care for all people living with prediabetes and diabetes.

The underlying assumptions in the development of these competencies are that:

- Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Health Practitioners remain individually accountable to their AHPRA registration requirements
- Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Health Workers and Health Practitioners provide clinical care consistent with the standards set by relevant national, state, local and institutional regulations and guidelines that guide their professional practice.

## 5. Development of the core competencies

A desk review of core competencies of the following TAFE courses was conducted and compared to the core competencies required at the post graduate level in diabetes education.

Certificate III in Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islanders Primary Health Care  
Certificate IV in Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islanders Primary Health Care  
Certificate IV in Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islanders Primary Health Care (Practice)  
Diploma in Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islanders Primary Health Care  
Diploma in Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islanders Primary Health Care (Practice)  
Enrolled Nursing.

The following competencies have been developed in line with the:

- Certificate IV in Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Primary Health Care (Practice).
- Characteristics Certificate IV
- Implementation Handbook Fourth Edition 2007

Characteristics of learning outcomes/competencies include:

- performance of a broad range of skilled applications including requirements to evaluate and analyse current practices, assist to develop new criteria and procedures for performing current practices, and provision of some guidance to others in the application and planning of the skills
- breadth, depth and complexity of knowledge and competencies would cover a broad range of varied activities or applications in a wider variety of contexts most of which are complex and non-routine. Motivation and skill in organising activities of self and others as well as contributing to technical solutions of a non-routine or contingency nature
- applications involve some responsibility for, and limited organisation of others.

## 6. Format and Layout of this Document

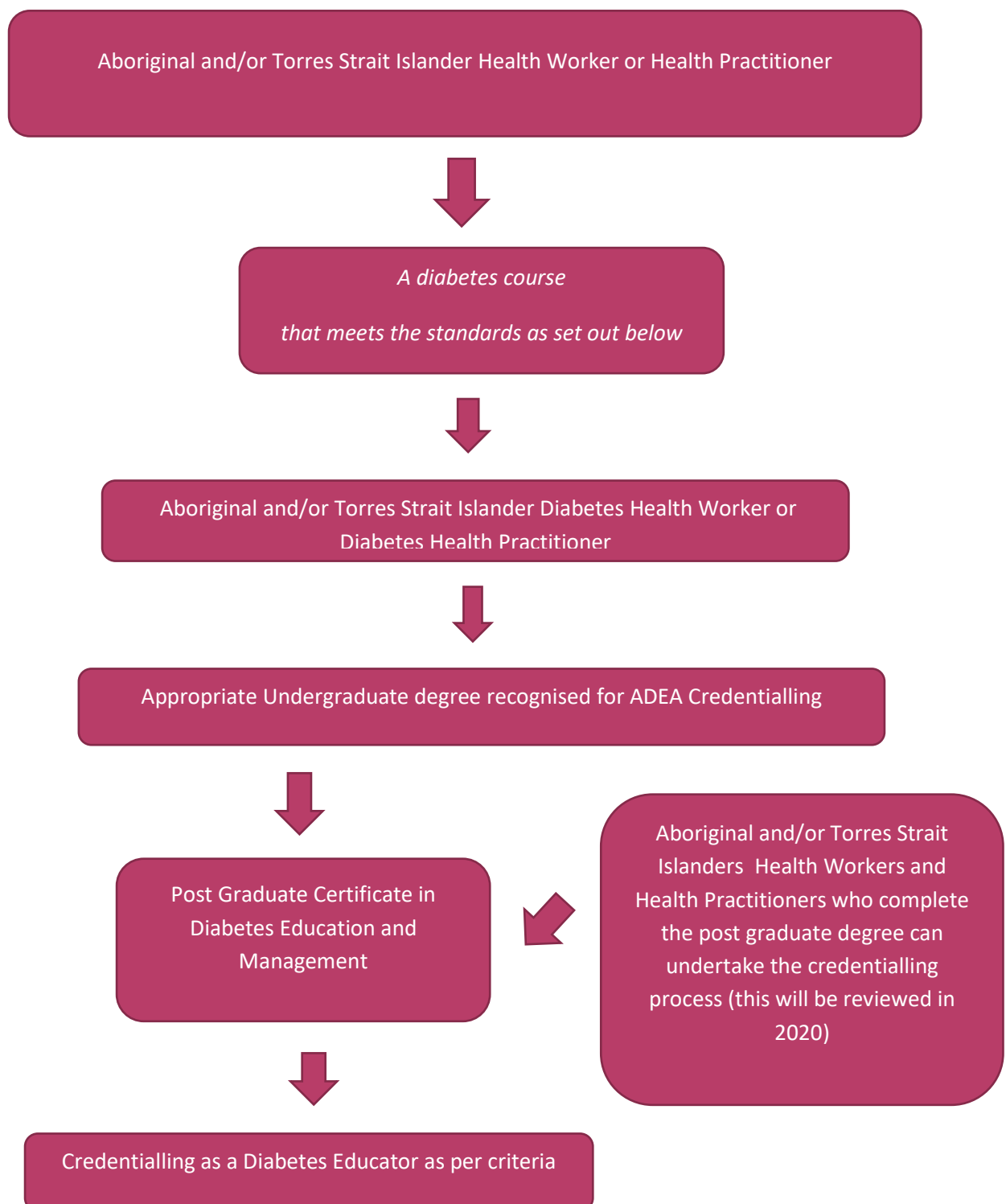
Under each domain of competency there is a list of skills, knowledge and values that make up the competency. Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Diabetes Health Workers and Diabetes Health Practitioners should endeavour to maintain core competency under each domain of practice.

Under each domain are cues or examples of what behaviours, skills or activities a person at each level would be expected to display.

This document should be used as a tool to guide the career as an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Diabetes Health Workers and Diabetes Health Practitioners have and to ensure that on-going professional education and development is directed at not only maintaining the core competencies but working towards becoming more proficient in all domains.

A pathway to recognition as an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Diabetes Health Worker and Diabetes Health Practitioner or Credentialling as a Diabetes Educator is shown below.

## Pathway to Diabetes Education for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Health Workers and Health Practitioners



## 7. Core Competency Domains and Skills

The following are the core competencies and cues that will help an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Health Worker or Health Practitioner in meeting each of the competency domains.

### Domain 1: Clinical Practice

**Competency:**

Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Diabetes Health Workers and Diabetes Health Practitioners *apply knowledge of best practice treatment, management and care to people with prediabetes and diabetes.*

*They work within an interdisciplinary team to tailor clinical interventions to the individual and to maximise the health outcomes for all people living with, or at risk of developing diabetes.*

**Core skills, knowledge and values**

Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Diabetes Health Workers and Diabetes Health Practitioners:

- apply or promote current principles of evidence based practice to the treatment, management and care of people living with prediabetes and diabetes
- provide or promote clinical care that is consistent with the applicable regulatory framework governing Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Health Workers and Health Practitioners
- apply or promote systematic and comprehensive person-centred care that is delivered across the lifespan
- clearly articulate the differences between prediabetes, type 1 diabetes, type 2 diabetes, gestational diabetes and other types of diabetes
- clearly articulate the factors associated with the development of diabetes
- recognise and manage hypoglycaemia and hyperglycaemia
- describe the interrelationship between nutrition, exercise, stress, and medications for diabetes management
- explain how to use medicines to effectively manage diabetes
- explain the relationship between diabetes and other conditions (e.g. heart disease, kidney disease)
- explain the relationship between diabetes and microvascular disease
- explain the basic components of treatment appropriate for each type of diabetes
- explain the interdisciplinary nature of the management and support of a person living with diabetes
- utilise clinical assessment to interpret and monitor clinical indicators of general health status and metabolic management, and accurately analyse this information to guide clinical decision making and referral.

**Cues:**

- consults and provides education whereby the person with diabetes is the central person in the day to day management of their condition and supports clients to take an active part in its management
- refers to professional practice guidelines when providing clinical care
- explains how to use medicines to effectively manage diabetes
- seeks support from others in complex cases
- seeks to improve and maintain clinical knowledge and skills

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- adheres to the regulatory framework and decision making framework within which he/she practices
- provides accurate information on prediabetes, all types of diabetes to clients, other health professionals and other members of the community
- provides accurate information about the interrelationship between nutrition, exercise, stress, and medications for diabetes management
- accurately undertakes a clinical assessment of the person living with or at risk of developing diabetes and effectively actions on clinical indicators
- effectively communicates progress with other health professionals
- identifies the need to refer for clinical care outside their expertise and selects appropriate services
- uses appropriate and validated tools to assess the needs of the person with diabetes
- actively collaborates with the person with diabetes, the referring practitioner and other members of the diabetes care team to establish agreed clinical targets.

## Domain 2: Education and Counselling

### **Competency:**

Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Diabetes Health Workers and Diabetes Health Practitioners *apply evidence based education and self-management skills, interventions and techniques to improve outcomes for people living with prediabetes and diabetes.*

*They work within an interdisciplinary diabetes team to tailor interventions to individual self-management education needs.*

### **Core skills, knowledge and values**

Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Diabetes Health Workers and Diabetes Health Practitioners:

- refer to and apply evidence based guidelines and innovative techniques to enhance communication and self-management behaviours
- demonstrate appropriate communication and counselling skills to facilitate informed decision making by the person with diabetes
- understand and utilise evidence based education and motivational techniques to assist with the education, behaviour change and support of people living with or at risk of developing diabetes
- utilises a person-centred approach that is cognisant of the person with diabetes/their carer' cultural, economic and social background and life stage when educating and supporting the person living with diabetes or at risk of developing diabetes
- customise programmes or interventions to accommodate the age, literacy level, cultural background, and physical, or cognitive abilities of the person living with diabetes or at risk of developing diabetes
- apply cultural competency principles to maximise therapeutic relationships with all individuals in their care
- apply problem solving techniques and a non-judgemental approach when dealing with people living with diabetes or at risk of developing diabetes.

### **Cues:**

- applies health behaviour and educational theory to inform, motivate and support a person living with diabetes throughout their lifespan
- assists the client to establish realistic, meaningful self-management goals and success metrics
- applies exploratory questioning and reflective listening techniques to enhance communication and understanding
- assesses the client's understanding of the relevant clinical and self-management options available to them
- seeks guidance from more experienced diabetes educators when alternative approaches may be required to support and educate the client
- consults and provides education whereby the person with diabetes is the central person in the day to day management of their condition and supports clients to take an active part in its management
- seeks feedback from the client and acts on any feedback to make changes to practice
- is non-judgemental and respects for choices made by the person with diabetes/their carers
- effectively communicates progress with other health professionals
- keeps up to date with digital health information and mobile technology that promotes and enhances diabetes self-management.

### Domain 3: Research and Quality Improvement

**Competency:**

Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Diabetes Health Workers and Diabetes Health Practitioners *contribute to research and quality improvement to build the evidence base to support improvements in self-management prediabetes and diabetes education and care.*

**Core skills, knowledge and values**

Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Diabetes Health Workers and Diabetes Health Practitioners:

- are committed to improving the quality and outcomes of treatment, management and care for people living with prediabetes and diabetes through participation through ongoing quality management
- contribute to the monitoring and evaluation of the education and care provided at the individual, program and, where possible, at the population level
- apply quality improvement principles when undertaking or contributing to quality improvement activities
- explain how research has been used to develop evidence based guidelines and resources
- demonstrate basic skills in research methodology
- critically appraise research findings
- keep up to date with current research in diabetes education, management and care
- work towards translating research into practice
- apply evidence based research findings to the development and review of resources, policies and procedures
- critically appraise individual knowledge, skills and work practices and develop a professional development plan to address deficiencies in this area.

**Cues:**

- actively participates in ongoing quality improvement and research activities
- contributes to the ongoing monitoring and evaluation of the education and clinical care provided at the individual and program level
- seeks feedback on audits and quality improvement activities and implements remedial action where appropriate
- recognises unsafe and/or unprofessional practice in self and others and responds appropriately
- actively seeks critical appraisal of own performance from peers within own discipline and across the range of disciplines involved in diabetes care
- regularly critically appraises peer reviewed and relevant non-peer reviewed literature to inform and guide diabetes education and clinical management.

## Domain 4: Management and Administration

### **Competency:**

Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Diabetes Health Workers and Diabetes Health Practitioners *apply principles of program management to contribute to the safe, effective and efficient delivery of diabetes services that supports successful self-management of prediabetes and diabetes.*

### **Core skills, knowledge and values:**

Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Diabetes Health Workers and Diabetes Health Practitioners:

- demonstrate good organisation and communication skills in order to effectively and efficiently manage a client case load
- demonstrate good liaison skills in order to effectively support people with diabetes navigate the interdisciplinary nature of diabetes care and management
- demonstrate good written communication skills in accurately documenting and reporting interactions with clients
- explain current and emerging technologies that can be applied to diabetes education, management and support
- collaborate with the person with diabetes, the referring practitioner, and other members of the diabetes care team to establish agreed clinical targets
- efficiently and effectively coordinate care, identify unmet needs and refer or recommend referral to other health professionals as appropriate
- explain the organisational and community structures in place to effectively manage diabetes services
- explain the importance of maintaining accurate records and document clearly and precisely all aspects of relevant service delivery
- utilise and manage diabetes resources in an efficient and effective way
- provide accurate and up to date knowledge and information on the costs and subsidies available to people with diabetes/their carers
- contribute to the development of policies and procedures that support efficient diabetes service delivery.

### **Cues:**

- complies with professional, ethical and legal regulations, policies and guidelines
- effectively and efficiently manages a client case load
- effectively and efficiently utilises resources to deliver diabetes education services
- accurately documents and reports interactions with people with pre-diabetes and diabetes
- maintains knowledge and current database of other health professionals and services available to refer to
- actively facilitates the effective referral to other health professionals and community service to maximise outcomes for people with pre-diabetes and diabetes
- ensures client information is made available to relevant health care providers in a timely manner and within the prescribed bounds of confidentiality
- stores all records in accordance with national privacy laws
- conducts education in a suitable, private, physical environment and ensures client safety and confidentiality
- assists with the review and development of service related policies and procedures.



## Domain 5: Leadership and Advocacy

### **Competency:**

Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Diabetes Health Workers and Diabetes Health Practitioners *provide expertise and leadership within the health profession and advocate for best practice diabetes care for all people living with prediabetes and diabetes.*

### **Core skills, knowledge and values:**

Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Diabetes Health Workers and Diabetes Health Practitioners:

- are committed to advocating for best practice diabetes education and care
- show leadership in the speciality field of diabetes education, management and care and have the knowledge and confidence to act as a consultant and resource for colleagues, other health care providers, carers and other community members
- have the knowledge, skills and confidence to advocate for people with prediabetes and diabetes to improve their health outcomes
- seek opportunities to build the capacity and educate members of the community about the prevention and management of prediabetes and diabetes
- advocate to build the capacity of the health workforce and seek opportunities to educate other health professionals about the prevention and management of prediabetes and diabetes
- understand and apply the principles of mentoring
- recognise unsafe or unprofessional practice in self and others and responds appropriately according to professional codes of practice and organisational requirement
- seek opportunities to professionally contribute to the field of diabetes education, management and care.

### **Cues:**

- acts as a consultant and resource on diabetes education and management to others within the organisation they work
- disseminates the latest research, guidelines and procedures to other members of the health workforce
- recognises unsafe and unprofessional practice in others and responds appropriately according to professional codes of practice and organisational requirement
- advocates for diabetes prevention, education and care and builds the capacity of the health workforce in this area
- identifies high risk groups and groups with special needs and actively advocates to adapt the service to accommodate their needs.

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