

The following position descriptions for consumer worker roles have been provided with permission by CAN Mental Health Inc., PRA, Uniting Care Mental Health and MHCC. They are to be used as templates only to provide guidance for your own position descriptions for your organisation. Importantly, the essential and desirable criteria for each are considered and should form the basis in your own versions of the job descriptions.

Carer Advocate job description

The Carer Assist Carer Advocate position description below includes experience of caring for someone with a mental illness or disability as a desirable criteria, and not essential criteria. This is because Carer Assist has found it is not always possible to recruit carers and they have a responsibility to provide a service. They ensure that all workers in the position who are not carers have worked in the field previously. Again, this template is designed to provide guidance for your own position descriptions for your organisation. It is important to design a position description that is most appropriate to your own organisation, whilst considering the essential and desirable criteria mentioned below.



Position Description

Carer Advocate

Reporting to:

Team Leader in Area

(and through the Team Leader to the

Manager, Carer Assist)

Supported by:

Team Leader

Manager Carer Assist

Tenure:

Contract until 31 March 2010

Hours:

Part time position, hours by negotiation, including some out of hours work

Location:

Griffith

Salary:

As per SACS Award Grade 3, enhanced by salary packaging

Position Objective:

Develop and maintain an excellent program of carer support which provides information, education, advocacy, individual and peer support to relatives and friends of people with mental illness (carers).

KEY ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Program Delivery

- Provide individually tailored information to carers
- Undertake individual advocacy for carers, as appropriate, and in line with the service's empowerment policies
- Provide emotional support to carers
- Provide education and training to carers
- Develop local resources for carers
- Facilitate carers involvement in local mental health services
- Develop and support carer support groups and family groups as appropriate

Administration

- Develop own work plan in cooperation with the Team Leader
- Maintain data collection and statistical records
- Provide regular reports to the Team Leader and therefore to the Manager Carer Assist and through this position to the senior staff and Management Committee of Schizophrenia Fellowship and the Area Health Service and Centre for Mental Health

Networks

- Liaise with Carer Assist and Schizophrenia Fellowship staff as appropriate
- Participate in Schizophrenia Fellowship strategic planning processes
- Link with local carer and consumer networks
- Liaise with Area Health Service staff, other non-government agency staff and professional networks as appropriate, including presentations on Carer Assist
- Link with local carers' projects run by the Schizophrenia Fellowship and other mental health NGOs, including ATSI and CALD projects as appropriate

Other

- Other duties as directed by the Manager Carer Assist or SFNSW senior staff.
- Adherence and compliance to the Continuous Quality Improvement policies and principles of the SFNSW.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The NSW Government has put in place a new Family and Carers Mental Health program across NSW where staff from both Area Mental Health Services and selected non-Government Organisations (NGOs) work side by side in a collaborative approach to provide a comprehensive range of support services and training and education to families and carers of people with a mental illness.

The Schizophrenia Fellowship of NSW Inc. (the Fellowship) has been funded under this program since 2001/2, operating as Carer Assist (previously called the Carers Support Unit) as one of the demonstration projects.

The Fellowship's program has recognised the ongoing needs of carers of a person with a mental illness and addressed this need through the establishment of Carer Assist which employed Carer Advocates in regional areas to provide advocacy, education, information and training for people who care for someone with a mental illness. The Manager, Carer Assist has developed and sourced training packages and information kits and is responsible for supporting and supervising the Carer Advocates in the field. The Carer Advocates, under the supervision of the Manager, Carer Assist were required to develop localised resources for carers, as well as form appropriate networks and partnerships within their area.

There is now a team of staff in each Area, located at key sites across the Area. All staff will deliver support and education and training services to carers, working closely together to ensure a high quality and responsive service to meet the needs of carers. Each team is led by a Team Leader. The number of staff in each team will vary slightly depending on funding, geographic needs and staff recruitment. All staff will be given introductory training and regular training refresher courses, as well as being trained in the Well Ways and other carer education packages to be delivered to carers.

The Fellowship was established in 1985 by a coalition of consumers, carers and mental health professionals to assist people living with schizophrenia and their families and friends. Over the years its role has expanded to the provision of many services for people with mental illness, including government advocacy on issues of importance, and education of the wider community. The Fellowship has developed and supports many support groups across NSW, and established the first clubhouse recovery/rehabilitation program in NSW in 1994.

Carer Assist is a very important service of Schizophrenia Fellowship. The Fellowship's philosophy of equality and empowerment of consumers and carers and its practice of working with local communities and stakeholders is embodied in this program.

Essential Criteria:

- Knowledge of mental illness
- Experience in working with families and carers and/or people with a mental illness
- Knowledge of mental health services in the Area (or ability to acquire this knowledge)
- Excellent networking, interpersonal and written communication skills

- Demonstrated experience in working within the community development framework
- Proven problem solving skills
- Driver's licence and car

Desirable Criteria:

- Experience of caring for someone with a mental illness or disability
- Conflict resolution and advocacy skills
- Experience in the provision of training
- Knowledge of and experience in working with people from a culturally and linguistically diverse background (more important in some areas)
- Knowledge of and experience in working with people from an aboriginal background (more important in some areas)