

POSITION TITLE:	Advocate, Independent Mental Health Advocacy		
REPORTS TO:	Manager, Independent Mental Health Advocacy		
PROGRAM AREA:	Civil Justice	LOCATION:	Dandenong
CLASSIFICATION:	VLA3	POSITION TYPE:	Part time maximum term

POSITION SUMMARY

As part of the Independent Mental Health Advocacy (IMHA) program, provide representational advocacy to people on compulsory treatment orders, assist people to understand and exercise their rights and to enable them to participate in decisions about their treatment, care and recovery.

IMHA is a non-legal advocacy program that will be staffed and led by professionals with mental health consumer experience and/or backgrounds in community development, consumer advocacy, mental health advocacy, community sector advocacy, social work, mental health service provision or other similar fields.

RESPONSIBILITIES

1. Provide high quality non-legal advocacy services to people on compulsory treatment orders to enable them to participate in decisions about their treatment, care and recovery by:
 - a. Listening, clarifying and trying to understand what the person wants.
 - b. Assisting the person to understand his or her rights, the processes available to exercise these rights and the consequences of his or her choices.
 - c. Supporting the person to self advocate, or as directed, represent their views or preferences to others.
2. Make and receive referrals and triage inquiries from users of the program, mental health organisations and services including, but not limited to, hospitals, peer support workers, social workers, lawyers, caseworkers and other advocates.
3. Contribute to the implementation and continuous improvement of IMHA program including the development and review of policies, procedures and guidelines.
4. Contribute to positive engagement with consumers and consumer organisations to ensure consumer needs are at the centre of service delivery.
5. Participate in public promotion and education to assist internal and external stakeholders to understand the service and the role of an advocate.
6. Contribute to the health and wellbeing of self and others by participating in individual and team debriefing and mentoring.
7. Participate in individual and team professional development and keep up to date with relevant policies, legislation and maintain an understanding of issues impacting the broader mental health sector.
8. Collaborate with other VLA staff and contribute to the VLA strategy and other broader organisational forums,

RESPONSIBILITIES

projects and event.

KEY SELECTION CRITERIA

Skills

1. Rapport and relationship building –
 - a. Collaboration – builds and maintains trust relationships
 - b. Cultural competency – skilled in working with people who come from different backgrounds
 - c. Interpersonal diplomacy – is able to work with service providers and clinicians in various contexts and get buy-in to the service
2. Communication – listen, hears, is aware of own body language and gives clear messages
3. Analysis of the environment – assesses the organisational and ‘people’ environment
4. Negotiation and influence – understands the bigger picture and is able to create win/win solutions
5. Role and boundary management - understands, communicates and manages the scope and complexities of the advocacy role
6. Work management – uses methodical approach to managing workloads and associated stressors
7. Stand by consumer – on the consumer’s side, can ‘stand up’ for consumers and be a champion on their behalf

Knowledge

8. Knowledge of mental health conditions and treatments; and understands relevant policy and legal frameworks including the *Mental Health Act 2014 (Vic)*, *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 (Vic)* and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities.
9. Understands or has experience in the mental health sector and understands supported decision making and representational advocacy.

KEY ATTRIBUTES

1. Consumer commitment – believes in the consumer, rights focused, supportive, respectful, patient, flexible
2. Integrity – ethical, honest, transparent, accountable, credible, maintains confidentiality
3. Results focused – perceptive and insightful, assertive, lateral thinker, open-minded, resilient
4. Interpersonal qualities – is positive, reflective, composed, consistent, has a sense of humour, courageous, curious, kind

QUALIFICATIONS/ EXPERIENCE

- Experience in community development, consumer advocacy, mental health advocacy, community sector advocacy, social work, mental health service provision or other similar fields (mandatory)
- Post secondary qualification (certificate, diploma or degree) in a relevant field such as health, community

QUALIFICATIONS/ EXPERIENCE

development, community health, community mental health or social work (highly desirable)

- Mental health consumer experience (highly desirable)

OTHER RELEVANT INFORMATION

- To be eligible to apply for this position you must be an Australian or New Zealand citizen, permanent resident or hold a valid work permit or visa.
- You may be required to consent to a police check. Please note that people with criminal records are not automatically prevented from applying for this position and each application will be considered on its merits.
- If you do not hold a current Australian practising certificate, you will be required to disclose to VLA if you are a *disqualified person*, or have been *convicted of a serious offence* as those terms are defined in the *Legal Profession Uniform Law* (Victoria).
- You may be required to undergo or hold a current Working with Children Check.
- From time to time you will be required to travel between various office locations to deliver quality services to our clients or for professional development.
- This position may require you to independently travel to outreach services.

ORGANISATIONAL CONTEXT

About the position

This position will provide non-legal advocacy services to people on compulsory treatment orders to enable them to participate in decisions about their treatment, care and recovery. The role of an advocate is to respect the person's preferences and choices, to assist them to self-advocate and to act respectfully and accurately on their direction – it is not to provide legal advice, make decisions, advise, counsel or seek to influence the person's view. Advocates will assist with matters only relating to a person's mental health treatment, care and recovery.

In the course of working with users of the program, advocates will come into contact with many other people including family, support people, consumer consultants, community visitors, other advocates and members of the clinical team. Advocates will receive referrals from many of these people and from lawyers in our mental health and disability advocacy program. They will also make referrals to a range of other workers and organisations including peer support workers, social workers, housing and caseworkers. The program will be provided by advocates attending outreach services such as an in-patient unit of a hospital or other mental health service or through an information and referral phone service for consumers, support people, families and workers in other parts of the sector.

The program employs approximately four senior advocates and about eight advocates who sit within small teams based in Melbourne, Dandenong, Bendigo and Geelong. Each team is led by a senior advocate who provides day-to-day supervision including professional supervision and debriefing to ensure the health and wellbeing of the advocates. The senior advocates report to a manager who leads the state wide program.

VLA is seeking applications from people with a variety of backgrounds including, but not limited to, community development, consumer advocacy, mental health advocacy, community sector advocacy, social work, mental health service provision or other similar fields. People with mental health consumer experience are encouraged to apply.

ORGANISATIONAL CONTEXT

About the independent mental health advocacy service

Victoria Legal Aid reached agreement with the Department of Health and Human Services to deliver an independent mental health advocacy program. This program is the first of its kind in Victoria and will support the goals of the *Mental Health Act 2014* (Vic). The IMHA program is not a legal service.

It is a serious step for people to be detained and to receive psychiatric treatment against their will. It is vital that people subject to compulsory treatment have a say about their treatment, care and recovery, are supported to express their treatment preferences, and have their wishes considered, respected and where possible, followed.

Twenty two per cent of people helped by Victoria Legal Aid last year disclosed a mental illness or disability, and advocating for this group to be heard in the justice system has always been an important focus of our work. The service also aligns with our objectives: supporting people who are experiencing disadvantage, giving early and timely help, ensuring people know about their rights and options, and supporting them if they need to access other services.

About the Civil Justice Program

This program sits within the Civil Justice Program. The Civil Justice Program includes the Mental Health and Disability Advocacy, Migration, Equality, Commonwealth Entitlements and Social Inclusion subprograms. While this program will be distinct and independent from other Victoria Legal Aid services, it will complement and enhance our existing mental health legal services. Our services in this area have recently expanded across the state to deliver improved outcomes for people who are receiving involuntary treatment under the *Mental Health Act 2014* (Vic).

OUR VISION & VALUES

Our vision

A fair and just society where rights and responsibilities are upheld.

Our purpose

To make a difference in the lives of our clients and for the community by:

- resolving and preventing legal problems.
- encouraging a fair and transparent justice system.

Our values

Fair

We stand up for what is fair.

We aim to be fair when making choices about who and how we help people.

Care

We care about our clients and the community in which we live.

We look out for and take care of each other.

Courage

We act with courage backed by evidence about what is best for clients and the community.

We act with courage to be the best we can be.

VLA is an Equal Opportunity Employer and is committed to promoting a diverse and inclusive workforce. We encourage Indigenous Australians and people from culturally diverse backgrounds to apply for positions within our organisation. We will make reasonable adjustment where possible for people with disabilities.

Position Description authorised by Resourcing & Remuneration Manager.



Signed:

Date: 19 June 2017