

Peer Support and the 10 year plan

These are excerpts from the 10 Year Mental Health and Drug and Alcohol Services plan on the envisioned role of the peer workforce.

Read the full Plan at <http://www.mentalhealth.wa.gov.au/ThePlan.aspx>

13.9 Workforce

Strategy 13.9.2 Increase the peer workforce (p.84)

A qualified peer workforce is essential for increasing and rebalancing the workforce requirement. The employment of peer workers is supported at both the national and state level. Accredited training for consumer and carer peer workers is under development. In mid-2012, a Certificate IV Qualification for mental health peer work was formally endorsed within the Australian Qualifications Framework. This will open up further training opportunities for consumers and carers who are interested in working as peers.

In future it is envisioned that the commissioning of services would require incorporation of peer workforce positions, and assistance provided to review how peer workers can be introduced using existing resources. When employing peer workers, services would need to ensure a minimum of two peer workers are employed within the service to decrease the risk of isolation.

Actions

Action 13.9.5.1 Develop and implement workforce strategies (by the end of 2017). Includes:

- **Peer work strategy:** Work with employing stakeholders (such as the Department of Health, the private sector and non-government organisations) to increase the peer workforce and establish a career path for peer workers based on certification, experience and training

Community Support Services and Peer Support

Recognition of **peer support** as a type of community support service (p.30)

"Over the lifetime of the Plan we intend to make available a variety of recovery oriented community support services, including supporting the growth of the **peer workforce**" (p.33)

Strategy (7.5.4) Further expand access to alcohol and other drug community support services, with **Action (7.6.10)** By 2020, develop and commission a personalised support service for people with alcohol and other drug problems (approximately 175,000 hours of support), which would include **peer workers** (p.35)

13.7.4 System Navigation

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(Help Lines, Online Services, Peer Support Workers & Community Coordination) (pp.80-81)

Peer Support Workers : Peer support workers are able to assist with advocacy and provide social, emotional and practical support (such as helping someone get to appointments or helping them to identify the services they need). Often, peer workers share lived experience with the participants, and have been shown to reduce hospital readmission and increase discharge rates.

Peer workers have an important role in driving person centred approaches within services. Research shows that individuals have improved recovery from mental health, alcohol and other drug problems as well as a reduction in recidivism where peer support workers are engaged.

Peer support workers can also offer follow up phone calls to ensure that people are settling back into the community and connecting with relevant services, and they can deliver health promotion, education and training. Peer workers can be employed in services including outreach services, inpatient units, day programs, and telephone services.

The optimal mix shows a requirement for the peer support workforce to be substantially increased and embedded in not only the clinical areas but also in community support programs. These workers are an important component in helping people to navigate the system and to access the range of services they need to achieve the outcomes they are seeking in their personal recovery journey.

Actions -No peer workforce actions identified



CoMHWA



Consumers of Mental Health WA (Inc.) is a not-for-profit systemic advocacy organisation in Western Australia for people with a lived experience of mental health issues (consumers). We act as a peak voice led for and by consumers, through listening, understand and act upon the voices of consumers.