



Volunteer Addictions Counsellors' Training Program

Since 1989 a Volunteer Addictions Counsellors' Training Program has been running in Perth. It is a joint project between the Drug and Alcohol Office and the National Drug Research Institute, Curtin University of Technology. The aim of the program is to train and supervise volunteer counsellors who are attached to specialist drug and alcohol services. Over 550 volunteer counsellors have been trained and provided counselling services at range of agencies in the metropolitan and regional areas of Western Australia.

In 2001 the program management was awarded a National Organisational Excellence award from the Ted Noffs Foundation, Sydney for the Volunteer program. The program was also the winner of the prestigious 2001 Premier's Award for Public Sector Management, in the category of Social or Community Development.

All volunteers are placed at alcohol and drug agencies and supervised by experienced counsellors.

There are two major components to the program:

1. An intensive training program comprising eighteen 3½ hour workshops per week in both general and addiction counselling skills. Sessions cover general counselling skills including active listening, empathy, reflection of feelings, use of questions, supervision and confidentiality. Alcohol and other drug counselling skills include raising the issue of alcohol and other drug use, assessment, motivational interviewing, problem solving and goal setting, relapse and giving up. At the conclusion of the training program a weekend training workshop is held. All costs for the workshop are covered by the program.
2. A 12-month work period, in which volunteer counsellors provide a counselling service to one of the agencies taking part in the program. During this part of the program all counsellors are assigned to a supervisor who is responsible for the management of their cases. Volunteers are required to work a minimum of 4 hours counselling a week and will receive one hours' supervision twice a month.

On successful completion of the training program, participants will be awarded a Certificate issued through the auspices of the National Drug Institute, Curtin University of Technology. Graduates can also obtain a Certificate IV in Alcohol and Other Drugs Work (CHC41702) through Central TAFE WA.

People interested in applying to be a counsellor should possess:

- a non-judgemental and open minded attitude towards drug use problems
- a knowledge of, an interest, or background in the alcohol and drug field
- a commitment to working with adults and young people with licit or illicit drug related problems
- excellent interpersonal skills
- an ability to work with people from widely diverse backgrounds and different needs.

Applicants who have had alcohol and other drug related problems within the past two years are not eligible to apply.

Agencies offering placements include:

Palmerston Association Inc.
South Metropolitan Community Drug Service
North Metropolitan Community Drug Service
South East Community Drug Service
Mission Australia
Cyrenian Centre

Training will be held at:

Drug and Alcohol Office
Training Room
1st Floor, 7 Field Street
MT LAWLEY WA 6050

Saturday,
9.00 am - 12.30 pm

All applicants will be advised on the outcome of their applications to be volunteers. Because of the large number of applications received each year, this may take some time. It may be 4-5 weeks before being notified whether you have been accepted. A shortlist of applicants is determined and invited for an interview that will be held in May 2009. Training for successful applicants will commence in early June 2009.

If you have any enquiries about the program please contact Sue Helfgott, Manager Workforce Development on 9370 0347, email suzanne.helfgott@health.wa.gov.au