

Murrumbidgee Peer Work Placement Program

Participant Information Pack



Contact Us

mmhdaa@gph.org.au



More Information

mmhdaa.org.au/peer-work-placement-program





About the Murrumbidgee Peer Work Placement Program

The Murrumbidgee Peer Work Placement Program helps people with lived/living experience of mental health concerns, suicide and/or challenges with drug or alcohol use to start their career in Peer Work.

The Program supports people to gain work experience as a Peer Worker. Students can 'try out' working in a range of mental health, drug and alcohol services across the Murrumbidgee region.

Anyone studying the Certificate IV Mental Health Peer Work, or who has done Alcohol and Other Drugs Peer Work training, can apply to be part of the program.

This booklet gives more information about the program and answers some common questions. All the information is also available on our website.

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What is Peer Work?

Peer workers are people who have lived through their own challenges and recovery, which might be mental health issues, suicide or substance use (like drugs or alcohol).

Peer Workers are part of the health care system. Many mental health, suicide prevention and drug and alcohol support services will have Peer Workers as part of their teams.

As well as having a lived experience, Peer Workers are trained to have respectful, safe conversations and offer practical support. Their job is not only to help, but also to give hope by showing that feeling better and living a full life is possible for everyone.

Peer workers bring care and understanding, helping people feel heard by someone who truly gets what they're going through

Find out more about Peer Work

It can be helpful to find out more about what's involved in being a Peer Worker, before starting your study or job applications.

There are many places to learn more about Peer Work by reading, watching videos, or even taking part in online workshops.

There are also places you can do some short online training to learn some of the core skills needed to be a Peer Worker.

Below are some places you can check out to get started!



Peer Work Hub - NSW Mental Health Commission

<https://www.nswmentalhealthcommission.com.au/content/peer-work-hub>



What is peer work and how can it help me? - ReachOut

<https://au.reachout.com/mental-health-issues/professional-help/what-is-peer-work-and-how-can-it-help-me>



Peer Work Hub - NSW Mental Health Commission

<https://www.nswmentalhealthcommission.com.au/content/peer-work-hub>



Training for Consumers, Carers and Peer Workers - Lived Experience Australia

<https://www.livedexperienceaustralia.com.au/training-consumers-carers>



BEING e-Learning Hub - BEING

<https://learning.being.org.au/>



ConnectED - NSW Users and AIDS Association

<https://nuaa.org.au/connected>



Resources for Lived Experience Representatives - Roses in the Ocean

<https://rosesintheocean.com.au/resources-hub/resources-for-lived-experience-representatives/>



Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Lived Experience-led Peer Workforce Guide - Black Dog Institute

<https://www.blackdoginstitute.org.au/education-services/aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-network/resources/>



Lived Experience Workforce Guidelines - National Mental Health Commission

<https://www.mentalhealthcommission.gov.au/lived-experience/lived-experience-workforces/peer-experience-workforce-guidelines>



Lived and Living Experience - Alcohol and Drug Foundation

<https://adf.org.au/resources/publications/>

Getting ready for a career in Peer Work

Although having a lived or carer experience is a core part of a Peer Workers role, they also need to have the skills and training to provide good quality and safe support to others. Peer Workers are part of the health care system and have responsibilities as part of their employment and the service they work for.

Thinking about our own readiness to share our story, hear the stories of others and be part of a workplace is an important part of deciding if we want to work towards a career in Peer Work.

We might also need to develop some skills that will help us complete the training we need, enter the workforce or be part of formal employment.

There are many services and programs available to help if you have been away from the workplace for a while, are changing your career, or would like to work on your employment skills. We have included some of these below.

The programs listed are not linked to the Murrumbidgee MHDA Alliance Peer Work Placement Program. We have included them here as resources which you might find useful. Please follow the links to read more and find out if the service might be right for you.



Skills for life and work - Riverina Community College

<https://www.riverinacc.edu.au/skills-for-life-work>



Skills for Education and Employment - TAFE NSW

<https://www.tafensw.edu.au/programs/skills-for-education-and-employment>



Job Jumpstart - Australian Government

<https://www.jobjumpstart.gov.au/>



Skill Finder

<https://www.skillfinder.com.au/>



Neami Employment Support Service - Neami National

<https://www.neaminational.org.au/programs/neami-employment-support-service/>



Transition to Work - Workforce Australia

<https://www.dewr.gov.au/transition-work>



Career Transition Assistance program - Workforce Australia

<https://www.workforceaustralia.gov.au/individuals/training/activities/career-transition-assistance>



Disability Employment Services program - Australian Government Department of Social Services

<https://www.dss.gov.au/disability-employment-programs>



Peer Work Training and Qualifications

There are many options for gaining qualifications or doing training in Peer Work which will get your career off to a head start!

Have a look at some of the training providers below to see what might be right for you.

Please note that to take part in the Murrumbidgee Peer Work Placement Program as a Mental Health Peer Worker you must be enrolled to study the Certificate IV Mental Health Peer Work qualification.



TAFE NSW Certificate IV Mental Health Peer Work

<https://www.tafensw.edu.au/course-areas/healthcare/courses/certificate-iv-in-mental-health-peer-work--CHC43515-01>

TAFE NSW offer this nationally recognised qualification which will help you to develop the specialist skills needed to work with people facing mental health challenges.

Throughout the course, you will also examine links between mental health and alcohol and other drugs, as well as explore mental health in the workplace and community. You will learn to:

- work with diverse people
- promote self-advocacy
- undertake peer work practices.

The course includes 15 units of competency, including elective units.



MHCC Courses and Training

<https://mhcc.org.au/training/courses/>

The Mental Health Coordinating Council (MHCC) offer a range of peer-specific training and qualifications, across varied locations and flexible learning options.

Nationally Recognised Training options relevant to Peer Work include:

- The Certificate IV Mental Health Peer Work
- Mental Health Peer Navigation
- Peer Leadership

Other short courses on offer can help you develop specific skills relevant to your peer practice.



BUILD and SHARE Training

<https://nuaa.org.au/connected>

The NSW Users and AIDS Association offer free professional development opportunities for people in the lived or living experience Alcohol and other Drugs workforce in NSW.

- BUILD training will help you build your own capacity and confidence to start your journey as a peer worker. It runs for four hours per week for four weeks.
- SHARE training empowers you to share your story in a way that is purposeful, meaningful and sustainable. It runs for three hours per week for four weeks.

Why be part of the Murrumbidgee Peer Work Placement Program?

Being part of the Peer Work Placement Program will give you real-world experience as a Peer Worker. By working in different services, you will get a taste of the varied roles that Peer Workers can have and help you apply the skills you have learnt during your Peer Work training. This may help you decide where you would like to begin your career in Peer Work or give you great experience to draw on when applying for jobs.

Who can take part

To be part of the Peer Work Placement Program, you must:

- Live in the Murrumbidgee region
- Be aged 16 or over
- Not be currently working as a Peer Worker
- Able to take part in an unpaid work placement for a total of 80 hours
- Have a lived/living experience of mental health, drug or alcohol challenges
- Be enrolled in, or willing to complete, formal training/study in Peer Work.



Placement Streams

There are three different Placement Streams in the program. You can choose the area which feels right to you and matches your identity and career goals. Participants in each Stream will do 80 hours of work experience across four different services (20 hours in each). The placement streams available are:



Mental Health services

- Gain work experience as a Peer Worker in four mental health services.
- Have your own lived experience of mental health challenges.
- Be enrolled in a Certificate IV Mental Health Peer Work qualification.



Alcohol and Other Drugs services

- Gain work experience as a Peer Worker in four alcohol and other drugs services.
- Have your own lived/living experience of personal recovery from drug or alcohol use.
- Completed the BUILD and SHARE Peer Worker training with the NSW Users and AIDS Association (NUAA).



Aboriginal Services specialist

- Gain work experience as a Peer Worker working with First Nations people in four mental health, drug or alcohol services.
- Identify as Aboriginal.
- Have your own lived/living experience of mental health challenges or personal recovery from drug or alcohol use.
- Studying the Certificate IV Mental Health Peer Work qualification, or have completed the BUILD and SHARE Peer Worker training with the NSW Users and AIDS Association (NUAA).

How to Apply

You can express your interest in being part of the Placement Program online at mmhdaa.org.au/peer-work-placement-program or contact us at mmhdaa@gph.org.au for another way to share your interest.

The application process

Once you have applied, we will check you meet the eligibility criteria for taking part in the program. You will then be offered a time to have a conversation about the Placement Program to ask any questions, give you more information and talk about what you need to take part.

Following this conversation, if you would like to go ahead, you may be offered a time to meet with someone from our program team. The pre-placement discussion will focus on your commitment to the program, your readiness to take part and any supports you may need.

We understand that applying for placements can be stressful and will offer you some choices around how the application conversations take place to help you feel more comfortable.

How we will support you

We want all participants to feel supported and get the most out of the Placement Program.

Participants will have:

- The support of a Peer Mentor during the Placement Program.
- On-site supervisor at each placement organisation.
- An experienced Peer Worker to shadow and learn from.
- Group co-reflection sessions with other Peer Placement Program participants.
- Placement Coordinator for any questions or concerns during Placement.
- Access to the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) during placement.

Pre-placement checks

You will be working directly with people accessing mental health, drug or alcohol services. Anyone working in this setting, including participants in the Placement Program must have:

- **Australian National Police Check Certificate** completed within 6 months of starting your placement – you can find out more and apply for your check from: [Service NSW](http://www.service.nsw.gov.au/transaction/apply-for-a-national-police-check)
www.service.nsw.gov.au/transaction/apply-for-a-national-police-check.
- **Working With Children's Check** that is valid in NSW. A 'Volunteer' check is acceptable and is available free of charge from:
www.service.nsw.gov.au/transaction/apply-for-a-working-with-children-check
- A valid **NDIS Worker Check**. A 'Volunteer' check is acceptable and is available free of charge from:
www.service.nsw.gov.au/transaction/ndiswc-apply

You will be asked for these certificates during the application process and must provide them before you are formally accepted into the placement program.

Some organisations will also require proof of vaccination status for identified infectious diseases. See our Common Questions on page 11 for more information on vaccination requirements and exemptions.

If you have any concerns about your eligibility, please contact us, or let us know in the Expression of Interest form and we will be happy to talk to you about your personal circumstances.



Check out our Common Questions on page 11 for more information on these checks and how they are assessed

Common Questions

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I am studying the Certificate IV Mental Health Peer Work and am already employed as a Peer Worker, can I take part in the placement program?

No, the Peer Work Placement Program is only for people who are not already working as a Peer Worker.

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I have experience supporting someone with mental health, drug or alcohol issues, can I be part of the Placement Program?

At the moment, the Peer Work Placement Program is only for people with a personal lived/living experience. We are considering how we might be able to include people with a Carer experience in future.

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I am studying a different qualification but am interested in Peer Work. Can I take part in the Placement Program?

Peer Work has its own scope of practice and required knowledge and skills.

You must be enrolled in a training program or course which is specific to Peer Work to be able to take part in the Placement Program.





I have done the Intentional Peer Support training; can I take part in the Placement Program?

If you have completed a different Peer Work training, such as Intentional Peer Support, you may still be able to take part in the Placement Program. Please contact us to talk about your own circumstances.

Please note that many organisations also require Mental Health Peer Workers to complete the Certificate IV Mental Health Peer Work qualification before or early in their employment.



I have drug or alcohol lived/living experience, why am I not expected to do the Certificate IV Mental Health Peer Work qualification?

At the moment, this qualification is only for people with a lived experience of mental health challenges. If you identify as also having your own mental health lived experience, you may choose to complete the Certificate IV Mental Health Peer Work.

If not, or if you prefer to have an Alcohol and other Drugs focus for your training, we recommend the Peer Work courses offered by the NSW Users and AIDS Association.



Will I be paid during my placement hours?

The time spent on placement is not paid. The aim of the Peer Work Placement Program is to help people gain workplace experience so they can confidently begin a career in Peer Work. The Placement Program also helps people meet the requirements of the Certificate IV Mental Health Peer Work qualification.

You will be shadowing an experienced Peer Worker and will not be providing one-on-one support to people accessing services during your placement.



What will I be doing on placement?

During placement you will be 'shadowing' an experienced Peer Worker as they go about their work. You may also work closely with other members of the team, or complete some administrative tasks, however most of your time will be spent with a Peer Worker.

You will not be expected to provide one-on-one support to people accessing services during your placement.



Will I be guaranteed a job after placement?

The aim of the Placement Program is to give you experience in the workplace and help you choose what kind of service you might like to work for. You are not guaranteed a job with any of the participating organisations.

However, it will look great on your job applications and may help you build the knowledge to stand-out during interviews!



I have a criminal record, does that mean I can't take part in the Placement Program?

Having a criminal record does not mean that you can't take part in the Placement Program. If your National Police Check shows that a record exists, our risk assessment process will check if you are able to participate and if any adjustments need to be made.

The risk assessment process is confidential and is completed by an independent person who is not part of coordinating the Placement Program. The details of your National Police Check will not be shared with anyone.

If you have any questions or would like to have a confidential chat about your personal situation, please contact us.



What vaccinations do I need and what if I have a medical exemption from vaccination?

Some services participating in the placement program will require proof that you have had the following vaccinations:

- Measles
- Mumps
- Rubella
- Hepatitis B
- Varicella (Chickenpox)
- Diphtheria
- Tetanus
- Pertussis (Whooping Cough)
- Influenza (only when completing a placement from June 1st – September 30th each year)

COVID vaccinations are generally recommended but not required.

If you have concerns about your vaccination status, or a medical exemption, please talk to us about this during the application process. There are some services who have different requirements regarding vaccinations that you can still be placed with.



Have we answered all your questions?

If not, please contact us
mmhdaa@gph.org.au
02 6453 4417