



Volunteer Alcohol and Other Drug Counsellors' Training Program 2023

This program will be advertised on the Mental Health Commission website and in the West Australian Newspaper on Saturday 11 March 2023.

Applications will be available to download from the Mental Health Commission website from the 11 March until applications close on Monday 27 March 2023 at 4pm.

Please note: No applications will be received outside of this application period.

About the Program:

In 1989, the Volunteer Addiction Counsellors' Training Program commenced in Perth as a joint project between the Drug and Alcohol Office and Curtin University. In 2001, the program was awarded a National Organisational Excellence award from the Ted Noffs Foundation, Sydney. The Program was also the winner of the prestigious WA 2001 Premier's Award for Public Sector Management, in the category of Social or Community Development. Since its inception, over 700 volunteer counsellors have been trained and have provided counselling services at a range of agencies in the metropolitan and regional areas of Western Australia.

In July 2015, the Drug and Alcohol Office amalgamated with the Mental Health Commission. Expertise from the Mental Health Commission, the National Drug Research Institute, Curtin University and Edith Cowan University combined to present this Program.

The aim of the Program is to provide training and supervised placements to volunteer alcohol and other drug (AOD) counsellors. There is no guarantee of employment as an AOD counsellor at completion of the Program. However, approximately 30% of Program graduates have obtained work in the AOD sector.

There are two major components to the program:

1. Training Program – 5 months

An intensive training program held in Perth at the Mental Health Commission commencing in mid-June 2023. Training comprises of twenty, four-hour workshops held on consecutive Saturday mornings, on both general and AOD counselling skills and knowledge. Sessions on general counselling include active listening, empathy, reflection of feelings, problem solving and goal setting, supervision and confidentiality.

AOD counselling workshops include, theories of AOD dependence, prevalence of and reasons for AOD use, raising the issue of AOD use, AOD assessment, motivational interviewing, relapse and giving up, trauma informed care and practice, mental health and family inclusive practice. At the end of the training program in October a weekend of workshops is held at Muresk in Northam. The Program is provided free-of-charge.

On successful completion of the training program, participants will be awarded a certificate of participation from the Mental Health Commission and the National Drug Research Institute.

2. Volunteer Counsellor placement – minimum of 12 months

Shortly after the completion of the training program, participants commence a placement with one of the Program's partner AOD agencies, in which volunteer counsellors provide a professional counselling service to clients.

It is important that the placement is viewed by the volunteer as a professional commitment to both the placement agency and their clients, and as a continuation of their learning. Volunteers are required to work a minimum of four hours counselling a week, over a minimum of 12-months (up to 192 hours).

During the placement, volunteer counsellors are assigned to a clinical supervisor who will oversee and support the volunteer counsellor, and volunteers will receive one hour of formal supervision twice a month.

A criminal record check will be required prior to commencing placement. However, past criminal convictions do not necessarily exclude participants from being placed in an agency, especially if these are of a minor, non-violent nature. Placement agencies require workers to be fully vaccinated for COVID19, or have an approved medical exemption, to work on-site and this policy will apply to Volunteers on placement.

Agencies offering placements include:

- Palmerston Association Inc. (Perth)
- South Metro Community Alcohol and Drug Service (Fremantle, Mandurah and Rockingham)
- North Metro Community Alcohol and Drug Service (Warwick and Joondalup)
- North East Metro Community Alcohol and Drug Service (Midland)
- Southeast Metro Community Alcohol and Drug Service (Thornlie)
- Cyrenian House (Perth)
- Women's Health & Family Services (Northbridge & Joondalup)
- Wheatbelt Community Alcohol and Drug Services (Northam)

Qualification:

Participants who do not have an existing relevant social, behavioural or health sciences degree, or who are not currently studying a relevant degree, may apply for and complete a Certificate IV in Alcohol and Other Drugs Work (CHC43215) through North Metro TAFE, by work-place based assessment and attendance at workshops while on placement.

It is important to note that a Certificate IV is not accepted by many AOD agencies as sufficient qualification for employment as an AOD counsellor.

Participants who complete the entire Program and who choose to enrol at Edith Cowan University can apply for recognition of prior learning for Addiction Studies Unit ADS1151 - Addiction Studies: Fundamental Concepts through Edith Cowan University's recognition of prior learning process.

Who should apply?

The Program accepts people from all sorts of different backgrounds, and with a diverse range of skills, knowledge and life experiences. However, as this Program is designed to provide participants with the knowledge and skills to provide safe, supportive and non-judgemental counselling to people with AOD problems, it is important that participants are emotionally intelligent, have self-awareness and are able to manage their own psychological issues in a way that does not compromise the well-being of the client.

People interested in applying to be a volunteer counsellor should possess:

- A commitment to working with people affected by AOD-related issues
- Excellent interpersonal skills
- A non-judgemental attitude towards people who use AOD
- The capability to learn about and apply, evidence-based practice in the context of the unique needs of diverse people affected by AOD-related issues
- A willingness to complete the training and placement components of the Program
- English language literacy and verbal fluency
- Basic computer literacy

The following situations will exclude an application from being considered for the well-being of clients and the applicant:

- Those who have experienced AOD-related problems within the past two years
- Those who have experienced an AOD-related death of a significant other within the last two years
- People who will be absent for more than three training workshops
- Those who have been living in the community following residential rehabilitation, prison or another institutional setting for less than two years
- Those who are unable to commit to complete the training and placement components of the Program
- People who do not have up to date COVID vaccinations, or an approved exemption, before the commencement of placements.

All applicants will be advised on the outcome of their applications. Due to the large number of applications received each year, it may take up to four or five weeks before being notified of the outcome of written applications and only general feedback will be provided upon request.

A shortlist of applicants will be invited for an interview that will be held in May 2023. Unsuccessful applicants are welcome to apply for the following year's Program.

If you have any enquiries about the Program please contact:

Workforce Development, Mental Health Commission

Email: AOD.Training@mhc.wa.gov.au or phone (08) 6553 0560