

Responses to Key Selection Criteria for Peer Support Worker - THH

Qualifications

1. Certificate IV in Mental Health Peer Work or similar qualification.

I am a Diploma of Community Services graduate. I have four years of experience in the community services sector and two years of experience volunteering at Thorne Harbour Health in various roles. I have experienced peer work as a client of Thorne Harbour via the Re-Wired Program, and I am accredited/trained as a SMART Recovery Facilitator and have experience with peer work via Re-Wired v2.0.

Skills and Experience:

2. Lived Experience: Personal lived experience within the LGBTIQ+ community, demonstrating resilience and a commitment to mental health and wellbeing.

I have lived experience of discrimination as a queer, neuro-diverse, gender-diverse person of colour. I also have lived experience of addiction, homelessness, the recovery journey and lapsing/relapsing, barriers to seeking support, and family violence, and I understand the ways that stigma and discrimination contribute to health and social issues, including criminalisation and unstable housing.

3. Personal lived experience of engaging with the mental health sector as a consumer.

I am profoundly aware of the reality that my own mental health is a lifelong journey. I live with psychosocial disability. I have been diagnosed with Major Depressive Disorder, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, Generalised Anxiety Disorder, and have recently realised that I am neurodiverse and have been diagnosed with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder.

I have experienced shame, social isolation, judgment and ignorance attempting to navigate our healthcare and justice systems, and in terms of engaging with clients, I have a deep appreciation of the importance of creating a welcoming, safe environment, free of stigma and discrimination.

4. Empathy and Support - Exceptional interpersonal skills with the ability to build trust, establish rapport, and maintain compassionate and supportive relationships with consumers and their families.

In my role at Diamond Valley Community Support as a Community Support Worker providing emergency relief to vulnerable clients, I often have to lean into my interpersonal skills which thankfully are a strength of mine. I am able to rapidly establish rapport with most people by showing empathy and compassion. Active listening is critical and helps to make clients feel comfortable, safe and supported.

An example of my empathic nature and ability to show compassion occurred during a recent interview with a client who wasn't talking or engaging very much and initially only requested basic minimal food support. By actively listening, and by creating a space free of judgement and discrimination, and by asking the right questions, the client eventually broke down and disclosed that they were experiencing psychosis and suicidal ideation and worried about they might harm themselves. I needed to be authentic, open-minded and non-judgemental, in order to create a safe and supportive space. Opening up about my own lived experience regarding my mental health and the journey I am on was helpful. The outcome was the participant feeling less isolated, feeling "seen", and as per DVCS policy and process, I helped him to call the Crisis Assessment Team at Austin Health in Heidelberg. Based on the assessment completed by this team, the client was admitted to the psychiatric ward of the Austin as an in-patient the following week.

5. Experience offering non-judgmental support and active listening to individuals experiencing mental health challenges within the LGBTIQ+ community
Proven ability to provide effective and empathetic peer support, drawing from personal experiences to inspire hope and recovery.

Completing the SMART Recovery Facilitator training reinforced my capacity to provide non-judgemental support to my peers. Active listening was/is crucial in order to create an environment where clients felt comfortable opening up about their substance use. I needed to be authentic, open-minded and non-judgemental, in order to create a safe and supportive space. A memorable example was a group involving a participant who was a person of colour, with a similar ethnic background to me. They were not contributing as much as the white participants, and my instincts were telling me it would be helpful if I shared my own experiences of racism and discrimination in the queer community. Opening up about my own experience generated an immediate response. By showing empathy and compassion in regards to their circumstances, I was able to establish rapport and trust. The outcome was the participant feeling less isolated, and at a later meeting, I was able suggest a potential intervention in the form of a group specifically for queer M2Ms (men who have sex with men) of Asian backgrounds.

6. Advocacy and Peer Support: Advocacy for the rights and well-being of the LGBTIQ+ community, promoting peer-led support and empowerment

As an individual who is passionate about promoting social justice and equality, I have extensive experience in advocating for the rights and well-being of marginalized communities, including the LGBTIQ+ community. I believe that everyone deserves to be treated with respect and dignity, regardless of their gender identity, sexual orientation, or any other characteristic. In my previous roles, I have had the opportunity to work closely with individuals from the LGBTIQ+ community, providing peer-led support and empowerment. I understand the importance of creating safe spaces where individuals can feel heard, valued, and supported. I have also collaborated with various community groups to promote awareness and understanding of LGBTIQ+ issues. In addition to my experience, I possess excellent communication, interpersonal, and problem-solving skills, which are essential for advocating for the rights of marginalized communities. I am confident that my passion, skills, and experience make me the ideal candidate for this role. Skills and experience