So you want to be a peer worker?

This paper outlines important knowledge, skills and experience required to become a mental health peer worker.
What knowledge, skills and experience do I need to become a peer worker?

**Personal recovery and ability to support other consumers**

As a consumer you would have experience in your personal journey of mental illness, the mental health system and recovery. You will be able to reflect on this experience and use this in supporting other consumers through their personal recovery journey.

- Job Readiness Skills
- Previous Studies
- Consumer and Carer Run Programs

**Lived experience of caring and ability to support other carers**

As a carer you would have a lived experience of caring and the mental health service system. You will be able to reflect on this experience and use this in supporting other carers through their experience and journey.

- Life Skills
- Volunteering
- Previous Work Experience

**Consumer or carer peer worker role(s) (paid or voluntary)**

Choose to expand your knowledge, skills and experience as an existing peer worker.

**Undertake the Certificate IV in Mental Health Peer Work (CHC43515) qualification**
### Personal recovery and ability to support others

**Life skills**
Life skills are usually associated with managing and living a better quality of life. They help us to accomplish our ambitions and live to our full potential. Life skills can include literacy and numeracy, study skills, negotiation skills, employability skills, time management and organising skills, conflict resolution, stress management and problem solving skills. Life skills are not always taught directly but often learned indirectly through experience and practice.

“I had never been very good at navigating all the things people do on a day to day basis, but when I became unwell I felt incapable of completing daily tasks. My Support Worker assisted me to find a routine I was able to maintain. Now I believe my life skills are more efficient than ever. I am volunteering in a peer role and pride myself in being able to assist others who are experiencing difficulties in these areas.”

**PEER WORKER**

### Lived experience of caring and ability to support other carers

**Job readiness skills**
To be job-ready you will need to have the foundation knowledge and skills to be able to undertake the role of peer work. These can include reading, writing, mathematics, computer skills, problem solving, relationship building, critical thinking, reflective practice, history of peer work, recovery principles, cooperation and workplace discipline.

“I think what helped me gain employment in this role was my insight into my own experiences. I emphasised my volunteer experiences, part time work and university study, relating this to the Key Selection Criteria and I focused on how my own approach to keeping well is related to the recovery model.”

**PEER WORKER**

**Previous studies**
You may have undergone previous studies in the University and/or Vocational Education and Training (VET) sectors. These will provide you with valuable knowledge, skills and experience that you may use to move into mental health peer work. Employers may expect that peer workers have attained a minimum level of formal education.

“Re-entering the workforce after a long period of caring was a challenge even though I had really useful skills and knowledge from my previous employment and experiences. I think I just lacked confidence. My previous study and experience was invaluable in helping me gain confidence for my new role. I now have become more effective in my peer worker role and learned how to use my lived experience to better support carers and families.”

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**PEER WORKER**

Continued overleaf
To find out more:
To help explore your readiness to move into peer work, talk to your case manager, support worker, employment provider or supervisor.

To find out more about the Certificate IV in Mental Health Peer Work (CHC43515), visit www.vicserv.org.au

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**Psychiatric Disability Services of Victoria (VICSERV)**