



ARAFEMI

VOLUNTEERING WITH ARAFEMI

Telephone Helpline Workers

Helpline Workers participate in the direct provision of the Information, Support and Referral Service (Telephone, Email, Face-to-face and Message board) to Carers and families across Victoria. The Helpline operates from Monday to Friday between 9.00am & 5.00pm. A commitment of a weekly four-hour shift for a minimum period of 12 months is required. Volunteers participate in the Volunteer Induction Training, observations and on – the job- supervised calls. Ongoing support, external group supervision and debriefing are provided.

Support Group Convenors

ARAFEMI operates a variety of peer support groups, which are facilitated by carers as peer leaders or facilitated by a combination of paid staff and trained volunteer convenors. ARAFEMI groups operate monthly in the evenings; our current groups are for carers, relatives and friends, specialist carers groups for carers of young people, carers of people with Borderline Personality Disorder and a consumer peer support group for people experiencing Bi-polar disorder. Support groups all utilise peer support models and offer the opportunity for information sharing, increased understanding and mutual support, rather than 'therapy'. Volunteers participate in the Volunteer Induction Training, followed by observations and co-facilitation of approximately one group per month. Ongoing support, supervision and debriefing are provided. Group facilitation skills are desired.

Carer Chat room Moderators

ARAFEMI operates a chat room and message board for carers to get in touch, share information and gain mutual support. We currently operate 1 day time and 1 evening chat group. The chat room is a great environment to engage in group-processes, provide support and participate in delivering a message of hope and recovery. Volunteers participate in the Volunteer Induction Training, followed by observations and co-facilitation chat sessions once per week. Ongoing support, supervision and debriefing are provided. Some experience in on-line technology and group facilitation skills are desired.

Carers Speakers Bank – Specialist Mental Health

As a peak service provider for carers of people with a mental illness in Victoria, we receive a variety of requests from the media and community groups to access people who have or are actively caring for someone with a mental illness. Requests may come from: Radio, Television, News media and journals as well as government and community groups seeking representation, focus groups and other carer forums. Carer representatives may also participate in ARAFEMI training to other carers through sharing their stories and knowledge. ARAFEMI provides funding for travel or associated costs to being a carer representative.

The purpose of the speakers bank is to have a database of available speakers on hand to utilise in a variety of situations. There are opportunities to write articles, participate in radio or magazine interviews or to do public speaking in both small and large groups. It is entirely up to each individual, what they would like to participate in. Training and ongoing support is provided by ARAFEMI. If you have cared for someone with a mental illness, and would like to share your story/experience then the speakers bank is for you.

Media Monitors

If you are a keen observer, newspaper and other media reader - but do not wish to share your story, you may be interested in our media monitoring program. Our team of active carers regularly

inform us of articles, news and events, which may be of interest or that, would provide opportunity for proactive media responding. Media monitors are part of an ongoing strategy to raise the profile of carers and to respond quickly and effectively to the media in relation pertinent issues.

Carers Mentoring Program

Many carers have identified the significance of peer support in normalising their experience as carers by valuing the ongoing role of caring. Such sharing of experiences has been further identified as important in reducing stress and isolation that may come with mental illness in the family. We have had many requests from carers to be more involved in supporting other carers. Peer mentoring offers a way of providing mutual support flexible to the needs of carers. This new project builds on previous work through the CAST program and aims to provide short term / one off linkage and support via peer mentoring. All carer peer mentors receive training in advocacy and mental health, as well as completing our core training modules. Ongoing support, supervision and debriefing is also provided. Because we recognise the many demands on carers, this provides a flexible model of becoming involved.

Advocacy Advisory Group

As a peak support organisation for carers, advocacy is a key area of our service structure. ARAFEMI currently supports and runs the CAST program (Carers Advocacy Skills Training) and is representative on State-wide and National Advocacy Bodies. As a grass – roots organisation, ARAFEMI wants to ensure that the lived experience of carers is always represented. The Advocacy Advisory Group is about providing a forum for carer voice on issues that are relevant to carers. The Group will provide input into what are the key messages and needs that should be represented by ARAFEMI and other partner agencies. A report from each advisory group forum will be put to key government departments, carer groups and mental health agencies outlining an advocacy platform direct from carers. Formal Advocacy Advisory Group forums will be held twice a year, though the group will have a direct role in providing additional comment and input into key areas of mental health development. All group members will be provided with advocacy training and support. Assistance to attend forums will be provided.

How do I become involved?

If you are interested in becoming a volunteer or carer representative with ARAFEMI then please fill out the volunteer application form (see volunteering on our website) return it to us.

For further information please contact our Volunteer Coordinator on 98109300 or via email: volunteers@arafemi.org.au

Places are limited and the Volunteer Induction Training occurs approximately twice per year (generally in February and August). Ongoing training and supervision, support and debriefing is also provided to all volunteers.