

Advocacy Tasmania Inc. Mental Health Tribunal Representation Scheme



Training for Volunteers

Advocacy Tasmania Inc. (ATI) through its **Mental Health Tribunal Representation Scheme (MHTRS)** is offering a **free two-day** training that will provide participants with an awareness of the current mental health issues and barriers that people with mental health disorders experience from service providers, teach the skills helpful for future professionals in providing better service to mental health consumers, and to train participants committed to volunteering their services as Representatives for persons appearing before the Mental Health Tribunal.

The content of the training will provide students with an awareness of the common mental illnesses and an understanding of the behaviours associated with mental illness, and the difficulties persons with a mental illness face in society. It will inform students of the relevant Tasmanian legislation and tribunals, and it will offer strategies for lawyers and other professionals to help them best represent the interests of their mentally ill clients. This particular training is not offered anywhere else in Australia.

The five goals of the training are;

1. To increase the awareness of students about mental illness and the issues faced by people with a mental illness.
2. To provide a good level of understanding for students in how to best work with people who have a mental illness. (In any given year 1 in 5 people will experience a mental illness)
3. To offer participants greater opportunity in gaining employment.
4. To allow potential employers an additional gauge to assess applicants.
5. To provide initial training for those participants who wish to continue on to the MHTRS and actively represent clients in appearances before a tribunal.

The Training is in two parts:

- **The Skills and Awareness Certificate**
- **Intensive Tutorial and Practical Skills**

Burnie Training: 1st and 2nd May 2010

Launceston Training: 22nd and 23rd May 2010

The first day may be undertaken without any obligation to continue. The content will focus on understanding stigma and discrimination and the intentional and unintentional barriers that arise based on labelling of mentally ill individuals. The participants will learn skills in how to better communicate with their client and we will also cover Occupational Health and Safety issues. Participants will receive a Certificate of Participation on completion which may be helpful in obtaining future employment.

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The second part will consist of more specific practical skills and knowledge, expanding on the content of the first day. It will focus on the standards and skills necessary for Representatives to provide competent representation before the Tribunal. A manual will be provided that covers the course.

Participants who complete the second part of the training will then be able to represent clients before the Mental Health Tribunal. While the role of the Representative is autonomous during the hearing, Representatives will be fully supported before and after the hearing. Professional development is an on-going process offered through the Scheme.

Each Representative will:

- Have supervision and support from Advocacy Tasmania Inc;
- Be paid a reimbursement allowance for each representation they undertake;
- Be fully covered by insurance;
- Gain a written form of recognition and reference

The training will be free, with lunch included, and is available to all people who meet the selection criteria.

Selection Criteria – Volunteer Representative

- Volunteer Representatives must have a commitment to ensuring that the rights of people who are mentally ill are respected.
- Volunteer Representatives must complete the required training for inclusion in the Scheme
- Volunteer Representatives must be confident to speak and represent their client's interests before the Mental Health Tribunal
- Volunteer Representatives must have the appropriate communications skills to work effectively with clients, members of the Mental Health Tribunal, doctors and other stakeholders.
- Volunteer Representatives should have a level of maturity and/or sufficient life skills to appreciate the difficult issues associated with mental illness, and working with clients that have a mental illness.

If you would like to participate or have any questions, please forward your contact details to Diane at:

mhrep@advocacaytasmania.com.au