



## **Position Description**

### **Carer Advocate**

**Reporting to:**

Team Leader in Area  
(and through the Team Leader to the  
Manager, Carer Assist)

**Supported by:**

Team Leader  
Manager Carer Assist

**Tenure:**

Contract until 30<sup>th</sup> June 2013.

**Hours:**

Part time positions, hours by negotiation, may include some out of hours work

**Location:**

Various locations

**Salary:**

As per SACS Award Grade 3, enhanced by salary packaging

**Position Objectives:**

Develop and maintain an excellent program of carer support which provides information, education, advocacy, individual and peer support to relatives and friends of people with mental illness (carers).

**KEY ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES****Program Delivery**

- Provide individually tailored information to carers
- Undertake individual advocacy for carers, as appropriate
- Provide emotional support to carers
- Provide education and training to carers
- Develop local resources for carers
- Facilitate carers involvement in local mental health services
- Develop and support carer support groups and family groups as appropriate

**Administration**

- Develop own work plan in cooperation with the Team Leader
- Maintain data collection and statistical records

- Complete administrative, filing, petty cash and other tasks required to maintain a well-functioning office
- Provide regular reports to the Team Leader and therefore to the Manager Carer Assist and through this position to the senior staff and Management Committee of Schizophrenia Fellowship and the Area Health Service and Centre for Mental Health

### **Networks**

- Liaise with Carer Assist and Schizophrenia Fellowship staff as appropriate
- Participate in Schizophrenia Fellowship strategic planning processes
- Link with local carer and consumer networks
- Liaise with Area Health Service staff, other non-government agency staff and professional networks as appropriate, including presentations on Carer Assist
- Link with local carers' projects run by the Schizophrenia Fellowship and other mental health NGOs, including ATSI and CALD projects as appropriate

### **Other**

- Other duties as directed by the Manager Carer Assist or SFNSW senior staff.
- Adherence and compliance to the Continuous Quality Improvement policies and principles of the SFNSW.

## **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

The NSW Family and Carers Mental Health program operates across NSW where staff from both Area Mental Health Services and selected non-Government Organisations (NGOs) work side by side in a collaborative approach to provide a comprehensive range of support services and training and education to families and carers of people with a mental illness.

The Schizophrenia Fellowship of NSW Inc. (the Fellowship) has been funded under this program since 2001/2, operating as Carer Assist (previously called the Carers Support Unit) as one of the demonstration projects. We recently retendered for the program and retained all our three Areas – Greater Southern, Hunter New England and Sydney South West Area Health Services.

The Fellowship's program has recognised the ongoing needs of carers of a person with a mental illness and addressed this need through the establishment of Carer Assist which employed Carer Advocates in regional areas to provide advocacy, education, information and training for people who care for someone with a mental illness. The Manager, Carer Assist has developed and sourced training packages and information kits and is responsible for supporting and supervising the Carer Advocates in the field. The Carer Advocates, under the supervision of the Manager, Carer Assist were required to develop localised resources for carers, as well as form appropriate networks and partnerships within their area.

There is now a team of staff in each Area, located at key sites across the Area. All staff will deliver support and education and training services to carers, working closely together to ensure a high quality and responsive service to meet the needs of carers. Each team is led by a Team Leader. The number of staff in each team will vary slightly depending on funding, geographic needs and staff recruitment. All staff will be given introductory training and regular training refresher courses, as well as being trained in the Well Ways and other carer education packages to be delivered to carers.

The Fellowship was established in 1985 by a coalition of consumers, carers and mental health professionals to assist people living with schizophrenia and their families and friends. Over the

years its role has expanded to the provision of many services for people with mental illness, including government advocacy on issues of importance, and education of the wider community. The Fellowship has developed and supports many support groups across NSW, and established the first clubhouse recovery/rehabilitation program in NSW in 1994.

Carer Assist is a very important service of Schizophrenia Fellowship. The Fellowship's philosophy of equality and empowerment of consumers and carers and its practice of working with local communities and stakeholders is embodied in this program.

**Essential Criteria:**

- Knowledge of mental illness
- Experience in working with families and carers and/or people with a mental illness
- Knowledge of mental health services in the Area (or ability to acquire this knowledge)
- Excellent networking, interpersonal and written communication skills
- Demonstrated experience in working within the community development framework
- Proven problem solving skills
- Experience of Microsoft Office programs
- Ability to manage a demanding and diverse workload
- Driver's licence and car

**Desirable Criteria:**

- Experience of caring for someone with a mental illness or disability
- Conflict resolution and advocacy skills
- Experience in the provision of training
- Knowledge of and experience in working with people from a culturally and linguistically diverse background (more important in some areas)
- Knowledge of and experience in working with people from an aboriginal background (more important in some areas)