

Guidelines for the selection of trainees for the Advocate Training & Development Program

The replacement for the Training and Information Program (TIP) has a number of salient requirements which will need to be met by the ex-service organisations which provide advocacy services in either/both claims and welfare.

The requirements include

1. Selection of suitable persons to undertake a training program.
2. Provision of suitable on the job experiences.
3. Providing access for the trainee to a suitable experienced mentor
4. Supporting the trainee while they undertake the requirements of the formal training
5. Monitoring the trainee's experience and training progress through a workplace diary
6. Endorsing certain evidence of experience and performance, which, along with results from formal training, a determination of competence can be made.

Selection of trainees

In the past, people have come to TIP training for a variety of reasons. Under the new program, candidates should possess a number of relevant qualities which include

1. A desire to provide advocacy services to any member of the serving/ex-service community.
2. Possess a commitment to continuous improvement in skills and knowledge for as long as they practice as an advocate
3. Be prepared to work in accordance of organisational requirements
4. Be prepared to be mentored
5. Demonstrate adequate computer skills
6. Demonstrate excellent interpersonal skills
7. Demonstrate a high level of oral and written communication skills

All of the above should be assessed by the ESO as it exposes the potential trainee to advocacy experiences prior to any formal training.

The candidate should be permitted to sit in on initial and subsequent interviews with a client as an observer and with the client's approval. The candidate could also act as an assistant to a more experienced person in researching information or obtaining documents as necessary to progress the client's needs.

The candidate should also be provided with a mentor who will guide the candidate by providing a background for the actions of a practitioner; ie explain why things are done in a certain way and what governs that action.

Once the candidate has been assessed as suitable and the required experiences have been met, the candidate should apply to undertake the formal training pathway to the first pathway exit point (level 1 practitioner).

In today's environment, the use of information technology is of prime importance and all candidates must demonstrate sufficient skills to be able to undertake online learning and use various office applications required for advocacy practice. ESOs must assess candidates for these skills.

Candidates must also display empathy with clients and a desire to assist them as far as possible while remaining ethical. They must also be able to demonstrate good oral and written skills as a part of their role will include contact with service provider agencies and possibly medical practitioners in obtaining information or service to a client.

Ex-service organisations which authorise a practitioner must acknowledge that it is their organisation which accepts any risk of litigation resulting from the actions of a practitioner advocate. It is in the ESO's interest to ensure that risk is minimised by selecting the right people and closely monitoring their progress and performance.