



# **Information Kit for New Community Support Workers**

## **What is a Community Information and Support Centre (CISC)?**

- A CISC is a community-based information, support and referral service. Most CISCs are located near or in shopping areas and often share premises with other community service organisations. CISCs offer a wide range of services to their clients provided either by trained volunteer community information workers, or by referring to other workers at specialist community organisations based locally.
- CISCs are located in metropolitan, regional and rural locations throughout Victoria. . They may be called either a Citizens Advice Bureau, or a Community Information and Support Service or Community Information Service. Each agency provides a range of services reflecting the community's interest and needs, including tourism.
- Most CISCs offer a range of other services, which can include emergency relief, housing information and support, legal advice, financial counselling and taxation assistance. The assistance and aid given can vary considerably from agency to agency. All of these services are provided by qualified and trained workers.
- By working in a CISC, a Community Support Worker not only contributes to building and developing a vital local community service but also gains a range of personal skills and satisfaction through their involvement. CISC workers also pursue further education in tertiary courses that can lead to work in the community sector.

## **Background and Role of Community Information and Support Victoria (CISVic)**

- CISVic was established in 1971 as an association of members to provide standards, support, policies, training and procedures to its member agencies. It has provided training from its inception using trainers with experience in providing community information services.
- CISVic's primary source of funding is from the Victorian Department of Human Services.

## **The Aims of a Community Information and Support Centre**

Most CISCs have their own vision statement, aims, objectives and guiding principles. The following is an example:

- To ensure that individuals and groups have equal access to information about their rights, responsibilities and the services available so that they may be effective and independent members of their community.
- To exercise a responsible influence on the development of social policy and services.

A Community Information Support Centre offers a service that is:

- Free
- Confidential
- Impartial
- Independent
- and at all times recognises clients' rights to make their own decisions.

## **Community Development**

- Whatever mission statement, aims and objectives an agency may adopt, the underpinning philosophies of community information work are based on the principles of community development.
- Community development ensures that through the support of staff and volunteers, clients are offered a range of information, support and referral choices that will enable them to make the best possible decision for themselves.

## **Community Diversity and Impartiality**

CISC services are provided to clients irrespective of gender, ethnicity, religion, sexual preference, disability or age. All information provided is given impartially regardless of the personal views or opinions of individual agency staff.

## **Emergency Relief (ER)**

Many CISCs provide emergency relief to clients who are experiencing financial and personal hardship and all CISCs provide referrals to other local community emergency relief providers in their area. Emergency relief can be provided in a number of ways, some of which may include: food vouchers, referral to other agencies for clothing, food and household items, funds for paying household accounts (eg gas and electricity) and assistance with travel.

ER services are offered to clients in a way that is non-judgemental, provides choice, and at all times maximises the client's right to maintain their self respect and dignity. Each agency has established their own policies, procedures and guidelines to assist staff in the administration of this service.

## **Volunteer Work at a Community Information and Support Centre**

The role of a Community Support Worker (CSW) may include:

- Interviewing people who need assistance with a range of issues
- Speaking on behalf of clients where appropriate (advocating)
- Sourcing information through the use of a range of information resources which may include databases, the internet, directories and pamphlets
- Providing practical assistance, through advocacy and negotiation, filling out forms, referring and making appointments with other services
- Record keeping and statistical recording
- Working with others as a team, supporting the aims and objectives of the agency
- Being informed about agency policies and procedures
- Attending on-going staff training and development sessions organised by the agency or other organisations
- Keeping up to date with community, state and national issues, including relevant legislation
- Reception and general administrative duties
- Membership of a range of committees

With the exception of the last two duties, which are learnt on-the-job, the community information support worker must complete the CISVic endorsed training program.

## **Training for a Community Support Worker**

To be a Community Support Worker who interviews clients, requires completion of a 50-hour training module (of which 36 hours are face-to face and 14 hours are in the workplace), called Assess and Provide Services for Clients with Complex Needs.

The trainee receives a Statement of Attainment from GippsTAFE (the Registered Training Organisation) when they have successfully completed the training including the assessments involved. The trainee then undertakes a period of probation under the guidance of a mentor who will assist them to understand the role of a Community Support Worker and oversee their work. The manager/volunteer coordinator determines at what point the trainee has completed the probationary period. The manager then approves the issuing of a Statement of Endorsement to the worker. This statement indicates that the trainee has fulfilled all the requirements of the CISVic-endorsed training program.

## **Team Work**

All workers at a CISC work as part of a team. Workers are encouraged, within the policies and procedures of each agency, to make decisions that provide the best possible service for the client. When needed, other agency staff are there to offer advice and provide support and direction.

## **Time Commitment**

Volunteering needs to be tailored to fit in with the volunteer's life. Commitment to a CISC can be as little or as much as suits the volunteer, and this is ultimately a decision between you and your agency.

## **On-going Supervision and Support**

As a new volunteer you have a right to be supported and supervised within the agency either by the manager or mentor appointed to assist with your training. Each agency would have its own way of supporting the volunteers on an on-going basis.

## **Assess and Provide Services for Clients with Complex Needs** *(Also known as Unit of Competency CHCC416B)*

### **Frequently Asked Questions**

#### **What will I be learning?**

The training unit, Assess and Provide Services for Clients with Complex Needs, provides participants with the skills necessary to assess and deliver services to clients with complex needs in Community Information and Support Centres (CISCs).

#### **What does this qualification allow me to do?**

It enables participants to work as volunteer interviewers in a CISC.

#### **How is the course structured?**

The course includes:

- Working in a Community Information and Support Centre
- Interpersonal Communication, Interviewing and Client Assessment
- Agency Procedures
- Practice Guidelines, Ethics and The Law
- Complex Situations

#### **How many hours are involved?**

The total number of hours is 50, 36 hours in class and 14 hours of supervised on-the-job training in a CISC.

#### **How long will it take to complete?**

The 36 hours of training in class normally is scheduled over 6 days. The delivery may vary according to the needs of the group.

#### **Are there any pre-requisites?**

There is no pre-requisite qualification but literacy skills and an initial interview and acceptance as a volunteer by the Manager of a CISC are required.

#### **How much will it cost me?**

There is usually a charge for the training. Those on a concession receive a concession rate. Your manager can provide information about the training cost. Some agencies may also cover this cost or make arrangements about payment once a participant has been selected for the course.

**Are there any tests or assessments?**

Students are assessed throughout the training by observation within the classroom setting, working as part of a group, participation in class activities, on-the-job requirements and the completion of workplace activities. Most of the assessments can be completed during on-the-job placement at the agency.

**What qualification will I receive?**

This is a nationally accredited course and as Community Information and Support Victoria is no longer a Registered Training Organisation (RTO) it has an auspice arrangement with GippsTAFE to deliver this training. GippsTAFE will issue a Statement of Attainment on successful completion of this module. Some of our member agencies set up their own training sessions under a sub-contract arrangement. There are also other RTOs which deliver the training and issue their own Statements of Attainment.

**Can this training be used to provide a pathway to other training courses?**

The training is nationally accredited and entitles trainees to a Statement of Attainment, and may offer a credit into courses within the Community Services Training Package at other Registered Training Organisations, eg at a TAFE College.

**Is there any Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)**

If participants have a previous qualification or experience in a similar field of study, they may apply for RPL. Relevant documentation needs to be prepared and presented as evidence of your current competencies against the competencies covered in the course. Information on the RPL process and cost involved can be requested when you have an initial interview with the Manager or Coordinator at the CISC. (More details are available on last page of this Kit). There is also CISVIC's recognition of higher qualifications. (See final note in this Kit.)

**Who will be teaching?**

Training organisations are required to employ qualified trainers who are experienced in working with adult learners to conduct teaching and assessments.

**What are the national requirements for trainers/assessors of accredited training?**

Trainers and assessors have Certificate IV in Workplace Training and Assessment or its equivalent. In addition, they also have qualifications within their subject area, and relevant community experience, at or above the level they are teaching or assessing.

**How do I book?**

All course bookings are made by the Manager of a CISC using the GippsTAFE Registration/Application form. It is advisable to book early.

## **CISVic Course Fees**

- Fees for the CHCC416B 50-hour training are determined by Community Information and Support Victoria's (CISVic) Training Sub-Committee. There is usually a small charge for participating in the course which is made to Community Information and Support Victoria. Please talk to the manager of the agency about what is involved.
- These fees help to offset part of the cost of the training, including some of the administrative costs involved
- CISVic does not receive specific funding to provide this training, and meets the costs involved from its recurrent budget allocation. Individual agencies may also set up training under a sub-contract arrangement with CISVic. The cost may come from its own funds or from other sources, such as their local council. When an agency sets up training itself, under this arrangement, it is called 'auspiced training'.

## **CISVic's Refund Policy**

The 50-hour training fee is required to secure registration and is refunded under the following circumstances:

- Prior to the commencement of the training, the student has reasons, due to unforeseen circumstances, for not being able to attend.
- The training session is full, and the student cannot be offered a place.
- CISVic cancels the training due to unforeseen circumstances, such as low participation.

## **NOTE**

**Each Training Organisation has its own policies relating to Recognition of Prior Learning, Fees and Refunds. It is important to check these when applying for a Course.**



## **Volunteer Rights and Responsibilities**

Volunteering Victoria ([www.volunteeringvictoria.org.au](http://www.volunteeringvictoria.org.au)) has summarised some of the rights and responsibilities of volunteers, and this information may be of use to you.

As a volunteer you have the right to:

- information about the organisation for which you are volunteering
- a clearly written job description
- know to whom you are accountable
- be recognised as a valued team member
- be supported and supervised in your role
- a healthy and safe working environment
- be covered by insurance
- say 'no' if you feel you are being exploited
- be reimbursed for out-of-pocket expenses
- be advised of the organisation's travel reimbursement
- be informed and consulted on matters which directly or indirectly affect you or your work
- be made aware of the grievance procedure within the organisation
- orientation and training

As a volunteer you need to:

- be reliable
- respect confidentiality
- carry out the specified job description
- be accountable
- be committed to the organisation
- undertake training as requested
- ask for support when you need it
- give notice before you leave the organisation
- value and support other team members
- carry out the work you have agreed to do responsibly and ethically

# CHCCS416A Course Outline

Week	Learning Segments	Topics
1	<p>Working in a Community Information and Support Centre</p> <p>Interpersonal Communication, Interviewing and Client Assessment</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community Information and Support Centres</li> <li>• The Community my Agency Serves</li> <li>• Values and Attitudes</li> <li>• Personal Qualities and Role Boundaries for Community Support Workers</li> <li>• Interpersonal communication process</li> <li>• The importance of interviewing skills</li> <li>• Greeting the client</li> </ul>
2	Interpersonal Communication, Interviewing and Client Assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Listening</li> <li>• Responding</li> <li>• Assessment of Client Needs</li> <li>• The Structured Interview</li> </ul>
3	<p>Interpersonal Communication, Interviewing and Client Assessment</p> <p>Agency Procedures</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interviewing emotional clients</li> <li>• Telephone interviewing</li> <li>• Advocacy and negotiation</li> <li>• Locating and Providing Information</li> </ul>
4	Agency Procedures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Case Recording</li> <li>• Referrals</li> <li>• Advocacy and Negotiations</li> <li>• Maximising Income</li> </ul>
5	Ethics, the Law and Practical Guidelines	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Guiding Principles of Emergency Relief</li> <li>• Duty of Care</li> <li>• Child Protection and Mandatory Reporting</li> <li>• Occupational Health and Safety</li> <li>• Privacy</li> </ul>
6	Complex Situations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Crisis Intervention</li> <li>• Working in stressful and emotional situations</li> <li>• Emergency Situations</li> <li>• Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Backgrounds</li> <li>• Indigenous Clients</li> <li>• Worker Self Care and Debriefing</li> </ul>

## **RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING (RPL)**

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RPL is a process of finding out what people already know and what they can do. Recognition of Prior Learning recognises what you have already learnt from:

- Formal training conducted by industry or an education institution
- Other courses, eg formal or informal training
- Work experience
- Life experience, eg community work

The RPL process measures the skills and knowledge you already have against the skills and knowledge covered by the course. So if what you have learned elsewhere is relevant to the course, you may not have to complete the course or some of the assessments required for the course. Once you have your skills/competencies formally recognised and receive a Statement of Attainment you can begin your Probationary Period.

If you believe you are eligible to apply for RPL:

- Register to do the training course and apply through CISVic to GippsTAFE, or other training organisation providing the unit, for RPL through your manager, at the same time making the payment involved.
- Speak to the agency manager who can put you in touch with an assessor and arrange for you to be supervised during the first few weeks at the agency, including doing a supervised interview. Your assessor will guide you through the process.
- Collect certified copies of your qualifications relevant to the unit for which you are applying for RPL, and current Curriculum Vitae.
- Seek the help of previous employers and colleagues, or present manager, who can provide evidence of your ability to handle the work of an interviewer and verify your skills, eg by writing a letter of support.
- Provide copies of work documents, eg client case-notes, and other relevant forms of evidence, to your assessor as further evidence that you can handle the work involved.

**OR**

### **CISVic's Recognition of Higher Education Qualification**

If you have a higher qualification in Social Work, Social Sciences, Psychology or Counselling you may be eligible to fast track CISVic's endorsed training program. Please talk to the manager/volunteer coordinator of the agency to find out more.