

A Guide for Lived Experience Workers

IN THE WORKPLACE



What you can expect from your manager

You can expect your manager to support you in your work. Your manager will provide regular supervision (see more about supervision below). This is an opportunity to discuss what is working well in your role, what is difficult and what support you need from your manager or from your team to perform your role.



Ali was employed by the Victorian Department of Health to help Arabic-speakers understand the role of immunisation and access services. It was customary for clients to bring gifts to workers as a sign of appreciation, particularly if they originally came from rural areas where such gestures were culturally accepted. Gifts included anything from expensive perfumes to baked goods.

While Ali was familiar with these cultural norms, navigating the etiquette of gift-receiving within the government's policy posed a challenge. After discussing this with his manager, Ali would often opt to share or donate gifts and, where appropriate, explain to clients why he couldn't personally accept certain items to avoid any appearance of favoritism.

It is important that you explain to your manager what you understand are your community's expectation of your role. Similarly, discuss with your manager what processes are in place for you to contribute to changes or improvements in the way the organisation works with the community.

Also, let your manager know what types of support you may need for the initial few months of your work. For example:

- you may request support from a person who is in a similar role in the organisation (peer worker).
- you may ask how you can seek - and provide - feedback to your manager.

• Get involved

Ask your manager about how you can become more involved in the organisation. For example, as a member of committees and working groups. Doing this will help you in developing relationships across the organisation and extend your knowledge of your workplace.

• Meeting community's expectation of your role

Explain to your manager any complications that can arise when you find that you cannot respond to requests or meet community expectations. This will help you be clear about the type of community engagement which is required from you.

• Managing conflict

Ask your manager for the organisation process or policy for dealing with conflicts that may arise between team members, management, or community members. In any environment conflicts are inevitable and arise for a range of reasons and can be unsettling to everyone involved. These can be due to miscommunication, personality differences, opposing views/opinions etc. It is important to identify them early, and work with your manager to understand why they have occurred so de-escalation can happen early.

• Making mistakes

Everyone makes mistakes! This is not the end of the world – or your work. Your manager is there for you. Make sure that you are honest and report your mistake as soon as you realise. It is better to be honest and find a solution together than trying to hide a mistake and trying to sort its consequences alone.

What your manager can expect from you

A Position Description generally includes information about the organisation, where the role fits, who the role report to, and a list of key responsibilities. These responsibilities form the basis of the role and can be refined in a Work Plan when you start.

The Position Description will also include a list of 'selection criteria' which need to be addressed in the application and describe what sort of skills and experience the organisation is looking for.

Ensure that you have a discussion with your manager to be clear about what they expect from you. Discuss with your manager their expectations of your role and of you, and the goals they would like to see you achieve. Having a clear shared understanding of your Position Description is essential.

Communicate with your manager clearly so they can support you. For example, make sure you give them plenty of notice for any leave that can be planned in advance.

If you cannot come to work, you should let your manager know as early as possible. This applies to annual leave, sick leave, other personal leave, but also if you would like to work from home one day or take Time in Lieu (TIL).

Any change to your work arrangements needs to be first approved by your manager. They are managing a team and need to know – at all times – where everyone is and what are they doing. They need to make sure that everyone is safe and ensure that the work gets done.

When you start, or during supervision, ask your manager what the best way to communicate with them is if you need to ask for leave at the last minute, like sick leave: email, SMS, a phone call.

Similarly, if a member of the team has any issues, the manager will be able to step in and help them to solve these issues before they get worse. Communication is key!



Maria is a social work graduate employed as a bilingual case worker at a small ethno-specific agency. From an initial role helping newly-arrived migrants from Eastern Europe settle in Melbourne, she now is expected to run group work, do research, write grants and even advocate for community needs at government meetings.

Growing up bilingual and educated in Australia, Maria has often found herself in the role of interpreter and advocate for her migrant parents. This informal role is also expected of her by her employer with community members, even though it is not part of Maria's Position Description.

Maria feels increasingly stretched in her role. She decided to raise this with her manager, referring to how far her role has moved from the Position Description.

In short, your manager expects that you:



Maintain clear communications with them



Let them know if you cannot come to work that day



Respond to your emails and answer your phone while at work



Be at work on time



Apply for leave if you need some time off work



Raise any challenges early so that they can effectively support you

continued on Sheet #2 (Part 2)...