

A Guide for Lived Experience Workers

CHALLENGES AND WAYS TO ADDRESS THEM



Below you will find a table describing some of the challenges that Lived Experience Workers may face and how to address them.

CHALLENGES	WHAT CAN YOU DO?
<p>Burnout</p> <p>Work can be stressful and can cause mental strain when workers feel they cannot help others in the community.</p>	<p>Talk with other workers Be open to discussing work issues with others in your team. They may also be facing issues about keeping themselves safe and preventing burnout. Finding common ground with other staff can provide an opportunity to approach your manager with a joint request for more support.</p> <p>Talk with your manager Tell your manager when you experience challenges at work especially if they are affecting your wellbeing.</p> <p>Attend supervision Attend regular supervision with your manager to reflect on your work, identify support needs and find solutions to your problems.</p> <p>Don't work at home Do not take work home with you – switch off and come back to it tomorrow.</p> <p>Time off work Take regular time off from work to rest and come back refreshed.</p> <p>Use assistance available at work Access EAP (Employee Assistance Program) for additional support if you need.</p>

CHALLENGES	WHAT CAN YOU DO?
<p>Managing community expectations about your work</p> <p>Community members may have high expectations (“expecting miracles”) of the workers.</p> <p>Community members may not understand the limited power to make decisions that these workers have within the organisation.</p>	<p>Make sure that your work is clear to community members When you first start working with communities, explain your work so they find it easier to understand what you can and cannot do for them. For example, tell people that you cannot make major decisions or recommendations without your manager's approval.</p> <p>Knowing your community Discuss with your manager if you know something about a client or a community member because they are part of your community, and what you know may be relevant to them getting what they need.</p> <p>Unreasonable expectations Speak up when you feel your communities' expectations of your work are unreasonable. For example, you may:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ never promise anything besides saying you will ask your manager and try your best. This will help you manage community expectations and prevent resentment from community members. ✓ talk with your manager so that you are clear about the limits of your work. ✓ explain to clients or community members that you cannot help everyone with everything... but that you can find out who can help them ✓ be honest and tell people when you do not know how to do something. You can always ask someone and learn for next time

“It's so difficult and disheartening when we know we can't help and it's very hard to tell them that.”

(Lived Experience Worker)

Communicating with the community about your work


Suggest to your manager that they hold community information sessions or forums to explain to community members about your work.

“I think it will be good if organisation make efforts to make community understand process of accessing services and understand wait times. This includes forums and information sessions. It will lift the burden off workers.”

(Lived Experience Worker)



CHALLENGES	WHAT CAN YOU DO?
<p>Dealing with clients with high stress levels.</p> <p>Workers may engage with people who have alcohol and other drug issues and mental health problems and at times they may get aggressive or forceful with requests.</p>	<p>You are not working alone Remember that you are not working alone.</p> <p>Seek support from your manager, other workers and staff.</p> <p>Learn where to refer people who may be affected by alcohol and other drugs or have mental health issues.</p> <p>Sharing the load Remember you are not responsible for all the clients and people from your community.</p> <p>Talk with your manager about having other staff who can work with you in these cases. This will help you to say to people: 'I can't help you, but here's someone who can...'</p>
<p>Working outside work hours</p> <p>Some workers may feel they need to extend their working time outside of paid work time.</p>	<p>Learn to say "no" Know the limits of your work and learn how to say "no" to more work when you have too much work to do. Talk with your manager about strategies for this.</p> <p>Turn your work mobile phone off Have a separate work mobile phone and turn it off when you are not working (unless for a specific purpose or for emergency calls).</p> <p>Have a voicemail with a clear message about your work hours.</p> <p>Planning for emergencies Plan for emergencies when you are not available such as after-hours or on the weekend. Provide information about whom can people contact if you are not available; or let people know that you will help them later.</p>
<p>Living near community</p> <p>Living and working in the same community can be challenging. Community members may know where the workers live, know their relatives, have access to their personal telephone number or can come across them in the area they live in.</p>	<p>Clarifying your two roles Talk with your manager about your role as a lived experience worker AND your role as a community member and discuss with them strategies to prioritising the tasks that you have been given.</p> <p>Reflect on your role – volunteer and paid work Take time to reflect on what part does your voluntary community role(s) have in your life and how to balance this with your paid work.</p> <p>It is OK to give some assistance to others as part of your voluntary role, but you should discuss your voluntary work with your manager.</p>

CHALLENGES	WHAT CAN YOU DO?
<p>Explaining policies to the community</p> <p>Some community members may not accept the policies of the organisation and expect workers to support them without following the policies.</p> <p>Some workers do not have the opportunity to explain policies to clients and community members.</p>	<p>Why organisational policies matter Organisational policies are important for you because they establish your rights and responsibilities and the rights and responsibilities of others and of the organisation. You may want to organise to read these together with other colleagues or Lived Experience Workers to make it easier to understand them.</p> <p>Understand the policies and your role Ask your manager for help if you don't understand organisational guidelines and policies or if you think they may not be culturally appropriate.</p> <p>This will help you to explain policies to clients and community members.</p> <p>You are not alone Discuss with your manager, staff and other workers about how to explain policies to the clients and community members.</p> <p>Take advantage of available training.</p>
<p>Managing mistrust</p> <p>Some community members mistrust organisations and the government.</p>	<p>It's not a reflection on you</p> <p>Remember people's frustration or anger toward the service is not a reflection on you.</p> <p>Discuss strategies to address mistrust or anger towards your service with your manager and other workers.</p> 
<p>Cultural safety at work</p> <p>Racism is not tolerated in the workplace. If other employees or managers share racist, culturally insensitive jokes or use language that is offensive or use negative racial terms, workers can feel unsafe.</p>	<p>Training for staff</p> <p>You can ask during your interview or afterwards, about the type of cultural competence training that is provided at the organisation and how the organisation promotes cultural safety at work.</p> <p>You can also ask your manager how you can lodge a complaint or report an event that has caused you distress.</p> <p>Check if your workplace has a Discrimination, Bullying and Harassment policy. You can ask your manager about this policy and read it, so you know what is expected from staff</p>