

# **TransGuidance SA – A model for providing volunteer peer support services for transgender and gender diverse people and their supporters**

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## **Background:**

The transgender and gender diverse communities experience extreme disadvantages, with suicide rates at levels far higher than the general community. However, services for this community are severely lacking. TransGuidance SA was initiated to address the lack of services.

After training volunteer peer support workers, the program provided one-to-one support, information, and referrals to transgender and gender diverse people, and their loved ones from around Adelaide.

## **Methods:**

A Reference Group made up of health professionals and community members was formed to advise and support the program.

Volunteers were trained through: a course called *Peer Support Training*, by the Mental Illness Fellowship of South Australia (MIFSA – project partners with SHine SA); a course called *Mental Health First Aid*, by SA Health; and a specially developed in-house course with a TransGuidance SA-specific focus to bring the training together. Each volunteer was assessed individually, and required to obtain a Working with Children security check from Department of Communities and Social Inclusion (DCSI).

The service began in June 2016, running on two afternoons and one evening each week for five months. Clients were referred to the service by health professionals, or self-referred. The latter were screened by a SHine SA clinical psychologist, and all clients signed a legal liability form explaining expectations and limits of the program. Support workers were supervised by suitably qualified staff.

## **Results:**

Both volunteers and clients filled out pre- and post-evaluation forms of the service, and an evaluation of the program was carried out by an independent consultant. Quantitative and qualitative results of the program demonstrated the efficacy of the model of service.

## **Conclusion:**

The enthusiasm of transgender and gender diverse community members for the service suggests that this program provides a template for similar services around Australia and throughout the world.

## **Disclosure of Interest Statement:**

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