



Counterpart Peer Support Volunteer position description

Position title	Peer Support Volunteer
Reports to	Team Leader Operations and Volunteer Coordinator
Location	<p>Counterpart Resource Centre, Melbourne CBD</p> <p>Peer support is mainly provided over the phone. Women occasionally visit the Resource Centre seeking support and information or to attend Counterpart events. On occasion, opportunities exist to attend forums and events across Victoria. Once volunteers have finished their orientation period, there is the option to volunteer from home (with staff support). Volunteers from regional Victoria, however, can complete their orientation period from home.</p> <p>Volunteers with at least one year's experience can also choose to volunteer in the hospital-based Bridge of Support program at Sunshine, The Royal Melbourne, and The Royal Women's Hospitals.</p>
Shifts	9.30am–2.30pm Mondays, Wednesdays or Thursdays

What is peer support?

Peer support happens when people, linked by a common experience, share empathy, understanding and support. At Counterpart, peer support is about listening in a way that is sensitive to the needs and experiences of others. It may involve talking about aspects of your personal experience, but only when it is helpful and meaningful to the woman you are supporting.

Counterpart's peer support complements the support and assistance offered by health professionals. We never provide medical, legal or financial advice. Rather we focus on providing the emotional, social and practical support that can help women to live as well as they can, however they define that, following cancer diagnosis.

It is important that Counterpart volunteers know when to suggest appropriate services and health professionals who are able to provide specialist advice on matters that Counterpart does not have either the capacity or expertise to respond to appropriately.

As a Peer Support Volunteer at Counterpart, you won't necessarily talk with women with the same type of cancer to your own.

As a Peer Support Volunteer at Counterpart, you will be supported to:

- provide support to individual people over the phone or in person.
- provide interpreter-assisted support over the phone or in person
- assist people seeking information related to a cancer diagnosis
- assist with group activities, including workshops or information sessions
- inform about available support services such as counselling, services or support groups
- record key data about your work and respect the privacy of service users
- contribute to the on-going service improvement at Counterpart
- volunteer at a hospital-based Bridge of Support program.

Counterpart Peer Support Volunteers are:

- willing to undertake a comprehensive training and orientation program (both online and in-person)
- willing to embrace the values and principles of Counterpart
- motivated by personal experience of cancer to give support and communicate with empathy
- willing to listen and show compassion
- willing to support women with a different type of cancer to your own cancer experience
- able to work well in a team environment
- available to regularly attend rostered duty either at the Resource Centre, or from home, once experienced – at least monthly, but usually on a fortnightly basis (unless negotiated differently)
- able to seek out relevant information to support a service user's enquiry and communicate with the service user about the information provided.

How do I become a Counterpart Peer Support Volunteer?

1. Selection process

- Complete an application form online when Counterpart is recruiting volunteers.
- Once applications close, a Counterpart staff member will contact you to invite you to an interview or to notify if you were unsuccessful.

- Interviews are conducted by a small panel of Counterpart staff and Peer Support Volunteers. Our aim is to make these interviews as friendly as possible, and it is a chance for you to learn more about the program. Selection of women for participation in the training program will be based on suitability, available training spaces and on ensuring diversity in the volunteer workforce.

2. Training requirements

- Counterpart will provide volunteers with a training and orientation program that aims to ensure volunteers are skilled and equipped to undertake their volunteer job role.
- The training program includes a series of online learning modules and workshops, a comprehensive in-person induction day and practical support and mentoring from experienced Peer Support Volunteers in the Resource Centre throughout the training period. The Induction Day will take place in the Counterpart Resource Centre in the Melbourne CBD.
- After attending the induction day, volunteers from regional areas can opt to do their 'on-the-job' training component remotely, using Teams to receive mentoring from experienced Peer Support Volunteers.
- During the training and mentoring period, Counterpart is actively assessing the trainee's suitability for the role of Peer Support Volunteer. This ensures the wellbeing of the trainee as well as service users.
- Following the completion of training each trainee volunteer will be supported by staff when rostered on in the Resource Centre.
- Having completed the required training and orientation, the trainee volunteer and Counterpart discuss the volunteering arrangement, and if both parties are willing, you will be appointed a Counterpart Peer Support Volunteer.
- Peer Support Volunteer work will not fully commence until you have successfully completed all training and orientation requirements. Although you will continue to be fully supported and mentored as a Peer Support Volunteer, you will work more independently than a trainee.

Ongoing training

- Ongoing in-service training sessions are held three times a year.
- Peer Support Volunteers are encouraged to attend a minimum of two in-service training sessions each year.
- Ongoing training involves educational components, 'housekeeping' issues and an opportunity to discuss volunteering experiences – sharing stories about how volunteers are managing in their job role. In-service days provide a good opportunity to connect with the other volunteers and get to know each other.

Bridge of Support Peer Support Volunteer role

- Peer Support Volunteers who have volunteered at Counterpart for a minimum of 12 months are eligible to provide peer support through our Bridge of Support program (BOS) which runs at hospitals in Parkville and Sunshine.

- Candidates for BOS need to undergo hospital-specific induction training that involves online modules, meeting health requirements, such as proof of COVID and other vaccinations, Police Check and Working with Children Check. Candidates for BOS will receive an orientation on-site at the hospital. (Requirements vary between hospitals and are not determined by Counterpart. There are no out-of-pocket expenses for volunteers to meet these requirements.)
- Volunteers working at BOS will also be expected to work shifts either at the Resource Centre or from home at least once per roster (usually 3 months).

Support and debriefing

Counterpart works to ensure that all Peer Support Volunteers feel well supported and supervised. Counterpart staff give volunteers an opportunity to debrief and discuss at the end of each shift, particularly when difficult situations arise. In situations where a volunteer needs professional support to help her debrief this will be provided.

Time commitment

Peer Support Volunteers are generally rostered to work a shift, either in the Resource Centre or from home, five hours per fortnight: 9.30am–2.30pm. This includes a lunch break and time to prepare at the start and debrief at the end.

Volunteers working at the BOS program will be rostered for a four-hour shift at either the Sunshine Hospital or the Royal Melbourne and Royal Women's hospitals. The day and times of the shift will vary depending on the hospital.

One rostered day per month is generally the minimum commitment, although once a fortnight is more desirable. The maximum commitment is once a week. However, to allow greater access to the Peer Support Volunteer program for women with unique experiences, e.g. women living with advanced/metastatic cancer or younger women, a different level of commitment may be negotiated.

Given the intensity of the training program, it is hoped that Peer Support Volunteers will commit to Counterpart for a minimum of one year. Special circumstances may require a renegotiation of such a commitment.

'I enjoy volunteering at Counterpart. The friendly supportive staff help me to give back in a meaningful way.'

Counterpart Peer Support Volunteer