



Women's Information and  
Referral Exchange

# Support Worker Training Program



## What do WIRE Support Volunteers do?

WIRE Women's Information and Referral Exchange provides a free information, support and referral service to women in Victoria. Support Volunteers help run the

Women's Support Line via phone, email or live chat. They sometimes also assist in the Women's Information Centre.

WIRE welcomes anyone who is assigned female at birth or identifies as a woman, for more information about this please request a copy of our WIRE Policy: Trans and Gender Diverse Inclusion.

Women contact WIRE's Women's Support Line when they want to talk things through with a sensitive and supportive woman. WIRE Support Volunteers are trained to give women the space to explore their issues and form plans of action. For more information about WIRE's services, visit [www.wire.org.au](http://www.wire.org.au).

## **Who can volunteer at WIRE?**

Support Worker/ Volunteer Training pre-requisites:

- be at least 21 years old
- have sound listening, verbal and written communication abilities
- have a level of English language skills that enable them to competently perform their work and meet the requirements of the training program
- National Police Record Check
- International Police Record Check at your own cost (if you have lived outside of Australia for more than 12 months in the last 10 years)

To provide phone, email and online support to women on any issue, WIRE Support Volunteers need good communication skills, an openness to diversity, and a willingness to be challenged and learn. Support Volunteers work within a feminist framework, and accept the reality and consequences of gender imbalance in society and the value of women-specific services.

We embrace diversity in our training programs, and welcome women from all backgrounds and experiences, including those from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, women of all genders and sexualities, indigenous women, women with disabilities, sex workers, and older women. Trainees are expected to attend ALL training workshops.

Support volunteers are expected to be able to commit to volunteering with WIRE for at least 12 months with one four-hour shift per week. Please note that WIRE's service operates Mondays to Fridays 9am to 5pm. Besides regular shifts, trainees also commit to attend ongoing training and professional development as arranged.

All WIRE support volunteers must complete our Support Worker/Volunteer Training Program. Potential trainees must attend an information session, fill out an application and attend a small group interview.

WIRE is required by law to perform a National Police Record Check on all trainees. However, having a police record does not automatically exclude you from volunteering with us.

## **Our feminist framework**

Training opens many doors and offers new opportunities; most women who successfully complete the training program will progress to volunteering on the Women's Support Line, and sometimes in our Women's Information Centre.

WIRE uses our own well-developed and highly respected feminist model for training women in the skills of active listening, supporting and empowering women. We use a gender and diversity lens to examine how gender inequality affects women. We explore issues that women commonly contact us about, such as family violence, mental health and family law, and place them into a broader social context.

Our Support Worker/Volunteer Training Program involves nine full days of training. Trainees learn how to use WIRE's three-staged feminist framework when responding to issues.

We explore issues such as intimate partner and family violence, relationship breakdown and family law, grief loss and change, homelessness and housing issues, sexual assault, suicide, dealing with difficult calls, leadership and conflict, self-care and referral pathways into other organisations such as safe steps Family Violence Response Centre, CASA house and Salvation Army Crisis Services.

## **What does training involve?**

Training is very interactive and involves workshops and simulated exercises, readings and some written exercises. As part of the program, trainees are given the opportunity to practice their skills on our Women's Support Line. Trainees are supported by the team through reflective practice, and are debriefed by experienced team leaders who help Support Volunteers continuously improve their knowledge, skills and confidence.

Training courses are run twice times per year in February, September. Completion takes up to 9 months. Trainees need to complete:

- 9 days group training (usually one full day per week)

- 2 x two-hour observation shifts on the Women's Support Line
- 2 x three-hour evaluated shifts on the Women's Support Line
- 5 x four-hour probationary shifts
- a one-hour mid-training interview
- a one-hour end of probation interview\*

\* Not all women who complete the training will become a WIRE Support Volunteer.

WIRE provides a warm, supportive environment for women to learn, and offers trainees opportunities to participate in WIRE's other professional training programs. Successful completion of the Support Worker/Volunteer Training is a pathway to volunteering on WIRE's Women's Support Line.

## What does it cost?

- \$490 full price
- \$380 full-time student
- \$270 concession
- \$655 professional

For the training program to be open to all, arrangements can be made for women who may find payment difficult. Contact us for details.

An invoice for each trainee's fees will be provided when a woman accepts a training place in the program. Payment must be received by the commencement of training; unless a mutually agreed payment plan has been organised with the Administration and Finance Coordinator.

Trainees who start the training but find themselves unable to continue will be offered the following options:

- a place in the following training intake, if they inform the Training Coordinator within the first two weeks **OR**
- refund of 75% of fee if leaving within the first two weeks of program's start **OR**
- refund of 25% of fee if leaving within the first four weeks of program's start

Departure any time after four weeks of the program's start means the forfeiture of all fees. If you withdraw from training you must complete the withdrawal form and return it to the Training Coordinator.

## Scholarships

One free place each is available in each training course for an **Indigenous woman** and a **woman Asylum Seeker** who would be interested in participating in the training.

In recognition of the inspirational work of the women who founded WIRE in 1984, we created the Founding Mothers' Scholarship. One free place will be available in each training course for a **woman over 50** who is currently seeking work or wanting to return to work.

To apply for a scholarship contact the Training Coordinator (03) 9348 9416 (Option 4) or email [training@wire.org.au](mailto:training@wire.org.au)

## Like to train at WIRE but don't have the time to volunteer?

WIRE allocates up to three positions in each program for women working in the community sector who would like to develop their women-sensitive practice skills but do not have the time to be WIRE volunteers.

Taking up a non-volunteer position involves going through the normal selection and training process, plus the successful completion of five probationary shifts. The professional training fee is \$655.

## Access and equity

WIRE embraces diversity in its training program. We welcome women from all backgrounds and experiences, including those from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, women of all genders and sexualities, indigenous women, women with disabilities, sex workers, and older women.

WIRE aims to be flexible in terms of assessments by offering trainees a variety of in training, written, practical and home task assessments to ensure access and equity for all. Any trainee who experiences difficulty completing an assessment task, or requires support with literacy and numeracy, may seek the support of the group and Training Coordinator, to complete the task or negotiate an alternative assessment that demonstrates their competencies.

WIRE aims to create a workplace that is free of exploitation and discrimination and offers appropriate recognition of volunteer contribution. WIRE will not tolerate any form of harassment, offensive behaviour or discrimination on the basis of gender, race, sexual orientation, health status or disability.

Any trainee who experiences any form of discrimination or harassment should report the behaviour to the Training Coordinator or CEO, to be dealt with in accordance with the grievances and complaints procedure.

## **Support, guidance and welfare services**

At the commencement of the program all trainees will be provided with a training manual. Any trainees with language or literacy support needs will be assessed and offered appropriate support.

Throughout the program trainees will be provided with relevant training exercises, information about services and research articles to support their ongoing learning. Trainees who have completed the program are invited to take up relevant training opportunities from the ongoing professional development training calendar.

The WIRE Training Coordinator will offer:

- ongoing support and guidance during training sessions
- mid-training interviews
- evaluated shifts
- individual supervision on request

The WIRE Training Coordinator will also work with any trainees requiring ongoing support to access appropriate information, and counselling and support services.

## **Appeals**

Trainees may appeal any assessment outcome by requesting a review in writing. The Training Coordinator will then review the evidence of competence in consultation with the original assessor and make a decision.

## **Grievances and complaints**

Trainees who have a grievance with another trainee are encouraged to raise their concerns immediately, or as soon as possible, with the person concerned and work towards resolution of the matter.

Where an issue cannot be resolved or if the trainee feels unable to talk to the person concerned, the trainee should speak with the Training Coordinator and grievances will be dealt with as outlined in the Volunteer Policy Manual. Should the grievance pertain to the Training Coordinator the trainee should first bring the matter to the attention of the trainer. If the matter is not dealt with to the satisfaction of the trainee, the CEO

will mediate between parties and make a final decision in the event that the matter remains unresolved.

The Training Coordinator is also in a position to hear complaints and mediate between parties. There is a commitment to maintaining confidentiality for the trainees concerned. Parties involved will be encouraged to negotiate a mutually agreeable settlement.

## **Disciplinary procedures**

The following procedure is applied when WIRE considers that a trainee is not satisfactorily attending or participating in training, or alleged misconduct has occurred.

**Unsatisfactory attendance/participation** in the first instance the Training Coordinator will speak with the trainee about any concerns regarding their attendance or participation in the program. Any trainee who misses more than two sessions will automatically forfeit their place in the program.

**Misconduct** Should a trainee display behaviour that is deemed inappropriate (e.g. sexual harassment, racial discrimination etc.) or is disruptive, abusive or disturbing to other trainees or the Training Coordinator, the following disciplinary action will be taken:

- In the first instance, the Training Coordinator will speak with the trainee and outline the complaint. The trainee will be expected to discuss the complaint with the Training Coordinator and all efforts will be made to resolve the issue to the satisfaction of all parties. The trainee will be informed that this discussion constitutes a first warning and a record of the meeting will be kept.
- If the problem continues, the Training Coordinator will again discuss the issue with the trainee as per the above process. The trainee will be advised that should the problem continue that they will be asked to leave the program.
- If the problem continues, the Training Coordinator will again speak to the trainee and ask them to leave the program. Written confirmation of the action taken will be sent to the trainee as soon as possible.
- Trainees have the right to request a support person be present in each instance.

In each instance the trainee will be advised of their right to make a complaint to the WIRE CEO if they disagree with the disciplinary action.

WIRE has the right to ask any trainee to immediately leave the program, without notice, for any conduct that justifies instant expulsion. Conduct justifying immediate

expulsion may include, but is not restricted to theft, any acts of violence or threats of violence to person or property.

## Privacy

The information WIRE collects from trainees is to process program applications, and issue certificates. In keeping with the privacy legislation WIRE will not disclose information about a trainee or their assessment outcome with anyone outside of the organisation without written consent of the trainee. Trainees wishing to seek access to the personal information that WIRE holds, can contact the Training Coordinator (03) 9348 9416 (Option 4).

### What our Support Volunteers say...

*“WIRE has connected me to life.”*

*“I really appreciate being able to make a difference to the women who call WIRE.”*

*“What a great thing it is to be among a diverse group of wonderful women, in training and in the phone room. It’s been inspirational and a real learning experience.”*

If you would like to volunteer with WIRE as a support worker and participate in the training, the first step is to register your interest by calling **1300 134 130**. We will then send you an invitation to our next information session. Find out more about WIRE Call

**Women’s Support Line 1300 134 130** Visit **Women’s Information Centre** 372 Spencer St, West Melbourne 3003.

Visit [www.wire.org.au](http://www.wire.org.au)

(Updated 24/11 2016)