

Position Description



Position details

Position Title:	Social Worker
Purpose	You will work within a cohesive high-performing Health Justice Partnership, utilising your excellent psycho-social skills and experience, to ensure First Step Legal (FSL) provides a high standard of assistance to vulnerable and marginalised individuals who experience mental health, addiction and family violence concerns. You will be embedded in a legal service that is focused on access to justice and supports access to therapeutic intervention that improve the health and wellbeing of its clients.
Classification:	Salary Negotiable, subject to skills and experience SCHADS award
Reports to:	Co-Practice Manager/Principal Lawyer
Location:	St Kilda + outreach locations with WFH options as agreed and as per COVID19 requirements
Employment Status:	1-year fixed term contract, with continuation subject to further project funding
Hours:	Flexible Part-time 0.4-0.5 FTE (15.2-19 hrs per/week) subject to negotiation
Probationary period:	A six month probationary period applies.

The Organisation

First Step Legal (FSL) operates as a Health Justice Partnership (HJP) within First Step, a not for profit mental health and addiction clinic in St Kilda. FSL is a unique Community Legal Centre providing pro bono legal advice, casework and representation to among the most marginalised in the community. FSL practices predominantly in relation to criminal law and family violence matters and has recently added a family lawyer. Assistance is also provided with infringement, debt, VOCAT and other matters on an ad hoc basis. FSL currently comprises a small team of a Principal Lawyer, 2 part-time lawyers, a legal case manager, a legal administrator and several volunteer paralegals and lawyers.

FSL's vision is to increase *Access to Justice* for clients struggling with mental health and addiction issues to enable them to access supports to rebuild and improve their lives and by achieving legal and court outcomes supportive of their continued recovery and rehabilitation in the community. FSL also works to champion HJPs and therapeutic, compassionate legal practice via law reform and advocacy opportunities.

FSL aims to embody a methodology of practice which values:

- Delivering excellence in the provision of our legal services to clients within a framework of compassionate legal practice
- Ensuring clients are well-informed about the process and conduct of their legal matters
- Assisting clients who are genuinely engaged or wanting to be engaged in treatment, recovery and therapeutic interventions that will support their ongoing wellbeing

- Giving clients agency in decisions regarding their treatment that best support them and their needs
- Working hard to achieve legal resolutions that will support ongoing recovery and rehabilitation.

Funding Sources

FSL receives funding from a variety of sources including philanthropic, corporate, government and quasi-government sources. This includes Victorian Legal Services Board (VLSB) project funding and recently, 3 year Community Legal Services Program (CSLP) funding, administered through Victoria Legal Aid. FSL is expanding its HJP model by undertaking some new outreach pilots. FSL has recently moved into a new expanded office space in St. Kilda, adjoining First Step (with attendance limits subject to any COVID restrictions).

The Role in Context

This new role will embed a Social Worker in FSL's practice. The HJP model enables FSL to directly support clients with legal issues to overcome health, personal, physical and mental conditions to rebuild and restore their lives. The aim of the role is to deliver triage/assessment, counselling and short to medium term counselling and brief intervention goal setting to clients under an HJP model. This includes clients of First Step and Windana Therapeutic Community, as well as clients from two new outreach pilot projects (one at [Alfred Health](#); the other at [Star Health](#)). The incumbent will help shape the parameters of the new role, working collaboratively with clients, lawyers, clinical and medical staff as well as with the support of legal volunteers.

Cases will be handled in person or by phone and in line with COVID-19 restrictions and safety.

Key Responsibilities

Key Responsibility
<p><u>New Role Definition</u></p> <p>Work collaboratively with the FSL Team to develop the parameters of the new embedded role in the existing health justice partnerships and new pilot projects.</p>
<p><u>Triage, Legal Information, Referral and Advocacy</u></p> <p>Participate in the FSL's triage of referred HJP clients to –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Determine preliminary non-legal needs of referred clients • Liaise with HJP referrer to ascertain relevant background to support effective triage • Provide appropriate secondary consultation to HJP providers • Work collaboratively with the FSL Lawyers to make a Service Response Decision for referred HJP clients • Undertake advocacy and liaison on behalf of clients with a range of relevant health, community, education and legal services to enable access to and use of those services. • Contribute to identifying systemic issues affecting the delivery of services and contribute to informing relevant policy.

Assessment, Counselling and Case Management

Work with individual clients on a short to medium term basis to -

- Determine individual client requirements for addiction and psycho-social support and facilitated referral to appropriate support services.
- Conduct risk assessments to ensure priority and immediate interventions are taken.
- Provide high quality incidental counselling and brief intervention counselling to HJP clients utilising a range of therapeutic approaches to deliver agreed client outcomes developed under the case plan, until more stable assistance is available.
- Assist clients to identify and work towards their goals, including supporting them to remain engaged with current HJP supports or engage with other mainstream services.
- Review, revise and evaluate case plans against goals established with client.

Client Information & Reporting

- Accurately document and record all social work case notes, separately within the client management system, in line with any professional requirements.
- Maintain timely and accurate client records, meeting all requirements according to organisational policy.
- Prepare documentation and reports for relevant parties as required by the Managing Lawyer.

Organisational Obligations

- Attend and participate in all activities which meet FSL's organisational and professional development requirements. These include staff, team and agency meetings, professional development sessions, supervision and debriefing.
- Undertake a range of project or other duties required to support the effective delivery of direct services to clients.

Health & Safety

- Actively contribute to health and safety at FSL by being aware of safety policies and procedures and consciously applying these every day to ensure the health and safety of our workplace including additional requirements to maintain a COVID-safe workplace.

Personal Qualities

- Values-system aligned with FSL, including a genuine interest in working with vulnerable clients in promoting well-being.
- Ability to work autonomously and collaboratively as a member of a multidisciplinary team.
- Role modelling open-mindedness, respect and inclusiveness.
- Ability to manage competing priorities.
- Interest in and ability to share knowledge and expertise with colleagues in an inclusive way.
- Commitment to human rights and social justice.
- Flexible and adaptable approach to meeting goals.

Selection Criteria

Qualifications and Experience:

Mandatory

Relevant tertiary qualifications in social work or suitably qualified and experienced allied health professional

Highly Desirable

- Accredited Mental Health Social Worker
- Experience in a Drug and Alcohol counselling, Mental Health assessment, intervention and counselling, ideally including intake assessments, comprehensive psycho-social assessments and risk assessments and brief intervention goal setting.
- Experience in collaborative service design as part of a multi-disciplinary team, ideally in a Health-Justice Partnership or in an *access to justice* context.
- Experience with triage, counselling and advocacy of vulnerable clients regarding a range of issues related to addiction, mental health, family violence, welfare and legal matters.

Skills and Knowledge

- Knowledge of the impact of legal issues on mental health and addiction recovery and rehabilitation.
- Understanding of complex family violence dynamics.
- Strong knowledge of a range of suitable interventions, using a systems based framework.
- Understanding of health and other service systems and how they operate in Victoria.
- Interpersonal, communication, problem solving and analytical skills.
- Computer literacy skills in direct data entry for client information and word processing.

Conditions of employment

- This position will require some travel between sites and therefore the successful applicant must hold a current drivers licence.
- The right to live and work in Australia.

Approval and Acknowledgement

Date PD last reviewed:

New PD

PD Approved by:

FSL Managing Lawyer

Date of approval:

March 2021

