



WHĀRAURAU
Empower the Workforce | Manaaki Mōkōpuna

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IDEAS TO LIFE RANGAHAUA KIA WHAI HUA



Orientation for Youth Consumer Advisors

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Introduction

The Orientation Template was developed to support mental health and addiction services to onboard new Youth Consumer Advisors (YCA's). Acknowledging that each service is unique, the intention of this resource is to provide a flexible template that can be used in the orientation and onboarding process. This resource is best used in conjunction with our 'Employing a Youth Consumer Advisor Toolkit' and 'Youth Consumer Advisor Guide.'

The template is editable and can be adapted to fit each organisation.

If there are any questions on how to use this resource, or feedback on how it can be improved, please email yca@wharaurau.ac.nz for the current YCA's contact details.

A special thank you to the Youth Consumer Advisors who shared their orientation template and their experiences to inform this resource.

Taonga of lived experience

Unique, valid, and essential perspectives

To understand how services can be improved for people experiencing mental distress, it is essential to listen to people who have relevant experience. This ensures that our services are supported by authentic and rich perspectives that have come from the people that the services are in place for. It is also an opportunity to further understand how current services may or may not be meeting the needs of young people today. It also provides an opportunity to reflect on how YCAs can use their lived experience to assist teams and services, and how that fits in with their job responsibilities.

Changing perspectives within the mental health services

With changes due to Covid-19 and the use of digital media, young people have lived experiences that are unique to them. Young people with lived experience can have dramatically different views and opinions about services than service providers. For this reason, by inviting their input, the dissonance between young people and service providers is bridged. We create transparent structures within services that are youth friendly, easily accessible, and created for rangatahi based on their needs and input. Additionally, involving rangatahi with lived experience normalises mental distress, addresses stigma and discrimination, and improves the quality and relevance of the information gathered from people using services.

Definitions

Listed below are definitions of commonly used words in the Youth Consumer Advisors' workspace, please add additional service relevant definitions.

Rangatahi – Young person.

Lived experience/Peer – People who have experienced mental distress and/or addiction.

Mental distress – Used as a strength based, recovery focused language - non-medical alternative to the term mental illness.

Youth Consumer Advisors (YCA's) – Rangatahi who provide operational and strategic advice based on peer values, lived experience and recovery principles to ensure the voices of rangatahi who experience mental distress and substance use issues can influence the direction of services. For example, health and disability services standards legally require all health services to have lived experience input in the planning, implementation, and evaluation of service delivery.

Service user – A person who attends a service, may also be referred to as a *client*, *tangata whaiora*, *consumer* or another term. There has long been debate about how to refer to people who attend services and it is often a personal or organisational preference.

Tangata whaiora – An individual seeking wellness/with wellness.

Consumer/peer workforce – People with openly identified, lived experience of mental distress or addiction and recovery, working or volunteering in the mental health and addictions sector, who use their experiences to inform the work they do.

Youth Advisory Groups (YAGs) – Allows rangatahi who are currently using or have recently used a service, to come together and share their experiences, suggestions, and feedback to improve service delivery. YAGs are different to YCAs in the way that YCAs are typically hired to work in accordance with the service they are hired for, and YAGs can be voluntarily involved with various services.

Responsibilities of a YCA

Common responsibilities of a YCA are below. Please add to these responsibilities in relation to how the YCA role fits with your service.

A Youth Consumer Advisor (YCA) is a young person who has experienced mental distress and/or substance use issues. YCAs are employed to bring their lived experience and youth perspective to an organisation. Health and disability standards state that service providers should integrate procedures and policies relevant to people with lived experience participating in service delivery. Therefore, services employ rangatahi who have lived experience of accessing mental health and/or AOD services to ensure that their service delivery and structure are informed by people who are using their service and created with rangatahi wellbeing as the focus. There are no absolutes in what activities a YCA engages in, and this must be negotiated, firstly between management and the team, and then between management and the YCA. Everyone needs to be clear about the role of the YCA. For example, in some services, YCAs have direct client involvement; in other services, they do not. In some services, they attend the multidisciplinary team and management meetings, in others, they do not.

YCAs use their lived experience to advocate for rangatahi accessing mental health and AOD services on an organisational level and work alongside healthcare practitioners such as psychiatrists, nurses, social workers, psychologists, support workers, etc. YCAs hold spaces for conversations to understand and inform how services can be improved for rangatahi.

It is important to create opportunities for YCAs to be employed in youth services, as YCAs enable services to gather up-to-date perspectives of rangatahi. YCAs support services to understand the important issues for rangatahi. YCAs also play a role in supporting services to launch new initiatives or changes in service delivery by gathering feedback on projects from the start, as well as providing guidance and support throughout the planning, development, evaluation, and quality improvement stages of a project.

Support for YCAs

Training

Although no formal training or qualifications exists for YCAs, there are training opportunities that may support YCAs to feel more confident in their work. Whāraurau has developed several e-learnings, available on [The Goodfellow Unit website](#), for continuous professional development. For YCAs, to give them base knowledge of a range of mental health and addiction issues, the following e-learnings are recommended:

- [Foundations in Infant, Child, Youth and Whānau Mental Health \(ICAMH\) 3 – Taihoi | Youth Mental Health](#) – 3 hours to complete
- [Foundations in ICAMH 4 – Supporting the Wellbeing of Infants, Children and Young People and Whānau](#) – 3 hours to complete
- [Substance use and taiohi | youth](#) – 4 hours to complete
- [Introduction to Co-Existing Problems in taiohi | youth](#) – 4 hours to complete.
- [Working with Māori: an E-learning tool](#) - 60 minutes to complete.
- [Module 10 - Working in a Mental Health Context with CALD Children and Adolescents](#) | 4 hours to complete

National Youth Consumer Advisor Network (NYCAN)

The National Youth Consumer Advisor Network (NYCAN) is a group of YCAs working in ICAMH and/or AOD services across New Zealand. When YCAs are newly employed in their role, alongside their individual organisation's orientation materials, services reach out to Whāraurau to support them to become involved with NYCAN. Our recommendation is that organisations reach out to NYCAN or Whāraurau when employing a YCA. This helps to ensure that the YCA has a support network of colleagues in similar positions, is aware of other YCAs' work and deepens their understanding and knowledge about the role.

Mentorship

At Whāraurau, we use a tuakana-teina approach that ensures newly employed YCAs are mentored by the current YCAs before they leave the organisation or move into a new role. This approach creates a period of overlap and allows for YCAs to extend their skills as mentors and sources of knowledge, while supporting the new YCAs to feel encouraged by other rangatahi in similar positions. This allows for succession planning, and each new generation of YCAs can benefit from, and expand on, the experiences of previous YCAs.

Peer Supervision/Reflection

This is a collaborative effort in which a YCA receives regular support and assistance from fellow YCAs. It is a reciprocal relationship where YCAs meet to raise issues, have discussions and provide feedback. Receiving and providing feedback and reflecting on the work is beneficial for learning what others have done, are doing, and to see what is possible within this role.

Peer supervision and reflection are tools that provide guidance and support to new YCAs and are continuously used throughout the YCA journey. As YCAs gain experience, they can share that knowledge and expertise with others.

Orientation Checklist

This orientation template covers the essentials of onboarding new YCAs. Please edit this document to fit your service.

Remember that this may be the first employment opportunity for the YCA, or their first time working in a service, so provide comprehensive information.

First impressions are especially important and how a person is welcomed to a team can often determine their future experience. It may also be challenging for a YCA to transition from *using* a service to *working* in one. Therefore, it is essential to be understanding, build a trusting relationship with them, and highlight the support that is available to them.

The checklist below is a list of activities and introductions to people and the service. Delete or add to it, as necessary. It may be helpful to have due dates for each task to ensure their completion and add structure to the YCAs onboarding process.

Employee:

Date of Commencement:

1. PREPARATION FOR YCA'S FIRST DAY	
Employing a Youth Consumer Advisor Toolkit	
Youth Consumer Advisor Guide	
Discuss role of the YCA with team and expectations	
Let the team know YCA's start date	
Organise a welcome	
Assign a buddy	
Prepare a desk; if sharing, discuss this with desk mate	
Computer access and log on details	
Share team calendars, schedule intro meetings with staff	
Prepare welcome pack	
Cubby hole/in-tray/locker	
Email yca@wharaurau.org.nz with name and email of the new YCAs. The Youth Advisory Team at Whāraurau supports new YCAs become involved in NYCAN, informed of upcoming events relevant to YCAs, and other enquiries they may have.	
Arrange contact with previous Youth Consumer Advisors (if appropriate and possible)	
2. ORIENTATION TO THE SERVICE	
Position description and role	
Management structure (who do they report to)	
Performance review process	
Other services relevant to work area: EAP, supervision, essential training, etc.	
Computer – intranet (things needed for staff activities), shared drive, calendar and sharing, invites to optional activities/meetings	
Work area – desk, office mates, toilets, tearoom, notice boards, nearby staff	
Visit to relevant services (see Introduction to Managers)	

Meeting rooms and video conferencing	
Non Government Organisations (NGOs) – meetings, liaising	
Workforce development: Whāraurau, Te Pou, Le Va, Te Rau Ora	
National Youth Consumer Advisor Network (NYCAN)	
3. ORIENTATION TO THE COMPUTER	
Staff contacts, inter/intranet, website, forms, human resources	
Web and internet security, IT desk support	
Web pages, IT and other policies	
4. EMERGENCY PROCEDURES	
Emergency Flip Chart	
Fire extinguishers, hoses and alarms, fire assembly area	
First aid kit	
Safety officer	
5. SAFETY AND SECURITY:	
Access to the building and rooms	
Computer access	
ID badge and printing card	
Health and Safety policy – incident and hazard reporting	
Health and Safety Rep for work area	
Car parking	
Security	
6. OFFICE SYSTEMS:	
Phone – office and mobile (if included) – messages	
Hours of work	
Annual leave – application process	
Sick leave – calling or texting in sick	
Conference/training leave process	
Printer and scanner	
Ordering stationery/resources	
Booking equipment (rooms, cars, data show, etc.)	

7. INTRODUCTION TO:	
Line manager	
Supervisor	
Team (including admin and management)	
Other relevant teams or services (list services below)	
8. OUR ORGANISATIONS POLICIES (copy and paste links here)	