

POSITION DESCRIPTION

CHILDREN'S THERAPIST

Homeless Children's Specialist Support Service

October 2011

Junction Support Services (JSS), operating since 1989, is an independent, not-for-profit Community Service Organisation providing high quality and innovative services to single adults, families, children and young people in the Eastern Hume Region of Victoria. JSS is a charitable organisation and equal employment opportunity employer.

JSS' Vision: Through partnerships, we build bridges to enable people to achieve their full potential.

JSS' Values:

- **Potential of all people:** by acknowledging and respecting each other's differences and opinions and respecting clients' right to self determination
- **Integrity:** by promoting ethical practice; being professional in our dealings and being honest, trustworthy and reliable in our work
- **Excellence:** we are passionate about what we do and practice from the best interests of clients
- **Communities:** through nurturing and investing in quality relationships; pursuing collaborative approaches to effective practice and contributing to community education and awareness

The **Homeless Children's Specialist Support Service (HCSSS)** is a new Victorian homelessness initiative of the Department of Human Services and managed by its Housing & Community Building Division. This is one of four 3-year pilot projects across the State – to June 2013 – aimed at providing a specialist support response to children in homeless families, with a focus on early intervention and engagement with education. There is the possibility of ongoing funding at the completion of the pilot.

The Homeless Children's Specialist Support Service incorporates a suite of three support responses to children and families (where the child is the primary client), including: assessment and case planning support; enhanced case management support; and therapeutic group work.

The service provides support to children and families who are receiving case management support from homelessness assistance agencies including youth specific services, generalist family services, family violence services and cross target services.

Junction Support Services' Homeless Children's Specialist Support Service model adopts a framework of an early intervention approach to case management using a family orientated and child-focussed approach. The service model involves collaborative work with other agencies and referring workers. Co-Case Management and shared co-facilitation of groups will be features of the new service.

The **Children's Therapist** primarily provides therapeutic counselling to children (focusing on ages 0-12 years with a capacity to support children up to 18 years) who are experiencing homelessness or are from vulnerable families. Therapeutic counselling is offered in various forms including; one on one, group work, family work, and sibling groups. While the role is child focussed, this service does adopt a family orientated approach, requiring close work with the child's family to encourage their engagement in relation to the child's needs. All therapeutic work will support and work within the three Stream model of the service, alongside the Children's Specialist Workers and utilising the resources provided by the Children's Resource Coordinator. This role operates largely on an outreach basis, with some office-based work.

SERVICE OBJECTIVES

1. To provide a flexible and immediate response to improve the support outcomes (including improved engagement with education) for children accessing the homelessness service system, thereby decreasing the impact of trauma on both their immediate and long term emotional and physical wellbeing;
2. To reduce the stress on parents by assisting them to resolve the support issues of their children, enhancing their capacity to resolve their own support issues;
3. To enhance the understanding and capacity of the homelessness service sector to respond appropriately to the support needs of children who are experiencing homelessness, within a systematic, family-orientated framework;
4. To improve access to specialist and mainstream support resources for children and families experiencing homelessness; and
5. To increase inter-service collaboration and communication, making the best use of resources available to improve the outcomes for children and families in the Homelessness Service System.

POSITION OBJECTIVES:

1. To offer therapeutic services (individual and group work) to children of families who have experienced poverty, homelessness, family violence, and family conflict.
2. To provide support and advice about the children's specific needs to parents and/or families whose children are receiving the counselling service.
3. To provide secondary consultation services to homelessness workers, family violence workers and the wider community.

4. To provide educational information to the community about the needs of, and services for children who are affected by homelessness, family violence, and related issues.
5. To support and work under the Homeless Children's Specialist Support Services model as identified by JSS, in conjunction with the Children's Specialist Support Services team – located within the Wodonga, Seymour and Shepparton areas.

ORGANISATION CONTEXT / RELATIONSHIP:

The Children's Therapist reports directly to the Children's Services Manager.

Internal Liaison:

- CEO
- Client Services Manager
- Children's Services Manager
- Children's Resource Coordinator
- Specialist Children's Workers
- Other Children's Therapist
- Adolescent Counsellor
- Other staff members and service users

External Liaison:

- Local Government, State & Federal Government Departments
- Education Providers
- Other Homelessness Service providers
- Community Service Organisations
- Community Groups
- Statutory Authorities
- Health Providers
- General Public

KEY RESPONSIBILITIES:

Service Delivery:

- Provide therapeutic counselling to children from vulnerable families and those experiencing homelessness and family violence.
- Develop and deliver therapeutic group work to children using a variety of approaches, depending upon the perceived needs, in collaboration with Children's Resource Coordinator.
- Organise individual therapy sessions with children and/or families as required from group work observations (Stream 3), recommendation from the Children's Specialist Workers, and through referral from other programs.

- Provide therapeutic family work, as well as parenting information and advice to the parents/families of the children, engaging family members in relation to the child's needs.
- Participate in risk assessment practices to ensure the safety and wellbeing of children.
- Work collaboratively with the Children's Specialist Support Services team (located across the region), providing professional advice to the Specialist Children's Workers with relation to the children.
- Provide professional advice with relation to the children to Case Workers from referring agencies.
- Work within the Homeless Children's Specialist Support Services three Stream model; providing various forms of therapy as required to children from Streams 2 and 3, and coordinating therapeutic group work per the requirements of Stream 3.
- When appropriate and relevant, support and advocate for the children and/or their parents.
- Practice within the relevant Codes of Ethics – internal and external to the organisation.
- Respect and protect the confidentiality of children and their parents within the boundaries of an informed consent contract with each client.
- Provide competent service practice in accordance with the 'Children in Homelessness Services' document.
- Provide flexibility in service delivery and the therapeutic techniques employed/used, depending upon the perceived need of the child.
- Contribute to the growth and development of the program.
- Liaise and work in collaboration with internal Case Managers and external service providers where relevant and appropriate, enhancing outcomes for children and their families.
- Attend and participate in network meetings as required by the Children's Services Manager.
- Promote a safe environment for children and their families.
- Promote community awareness of the effects on children of homelessness, poverty, family violence, and family conflict through collaborative planning and action with the Children's Specialist Support Services team.

Performance Development:

- Actively participate in JSS' Performance Development System as per JSS' Performance Development Policy.
- Participate in own training and professional development as identified through the Performance Development System.
- Be 100% compliant with all aspects of the Performance Development System.

The Organisation:

- Implement Junction Hume Support Services' aims and objectives through competent work practices.
- Comply with Junction Hume Support Services' policies and procedures; funding guidelines; and legislative requirements.
- Adhere to established protocols that exist between Junction Hume Support Services and other service providers.
- Follow Occupational Health and Safety standards, guidelines and practices. Participate in the identification of potential and actual hazards and managing risks.
- Take responsibility for input into the day-to-day operations of the organisation, as well as policy development.
- Maintain the organisation's ideological framework of a strength-based work practice.
- Contribute to team building principles.
- Individually contribute to the effective communications within the organisation.

Administration:

- Undertake and maintain administrative requirements of the program including confidential client records, data collection processes, and action research information.
- Document activities and programs developed and evaluations undertaken.

Other:

- Attend meetings as directed by the Children's Services Manager.
- Other duties as required by the organisation.

SELECTION CRITERIA:

1. A relevant tertiary qualification such as Social Work, Social Science, or Counselling and/or relevant experience to this role.
2. An understanding of the developmental needs of children, with an ability to apply this knowledge effectively when providing therapy (individually or as group work).
3. An awareness of the impacts of homelessness and domestic violence upon children, and which therapeutic techniques could be used to address these particular impacts.
4. Experience counselling/providing therapy to children and/or families who are experiencing homelessness, poverty, domestic violence and family discord would be beneficial.

EMPLOYMENT BENEFITS:

- 5 weeks annual leave per annum
- 17.5% leave loading on 4 out of the 5 weeks annual leave per annum
- Generous salary sacrificing available with a wide range of options
- Annual wage increases (in accordance with Fair Work adjustment or CPI)
- 50 hours or \$500 per annum (whichever occurs first) to contribute to non mandatory training fees, for relevant training to the position held
- The support of regular internal supervision and some external supervision
- The potential to take leave without pay and an unpaid career break
- Ability to take all personal leave days as carers leave
- 4 weeks paid maternity leave or 1 weeks paid paternity leave
- A supportive environment that includes comprehensive induction and assistance with professional development
- Access to agency vehicles for all work related travel

CONDITIONS OF EMPLOYMENT:

This position is full time for 76 hours per fortnight, based in Shepparton, and operational Monday to Friday - 9.00am to 5.00pm. It is on a fixed term contract until 30th June 2013 (with the possibility of ongoing funding). The position will require some work to be undertaken outside of normal working hours. There is no paid overtime, but any extra hours worked will be accrued as Time in Lieu.

The salary for this position is classified under the Social and Community Services (Victoria) Award 2000 as Social Worker Class 2, Year 3, which includes 2 levels; the first one being set at award wage and second being set above award wage. The year selected as the commencement level of salary will depend upon qualifications and proven relevant experience, and includes the option of salary sacrificing. The terms and conditions of employment are in accordance with Junction Support Services Enterprise Agreement (known as 'Central Hume Support Services' Enterprise Agreement').

A maximum accrual of fourteen (14) hours time in lieu applies at any one time and is to be taken within one month of its accrual. No more than four (4) weeks annual leave is to be accrued without manager's approval.

Employer superannuation contributions will be paid to Health Employees Superannuation Trust Australia (HESTA) and in accordance with the Superannuation Guarantee Charge Act.

The successful applicant will be required to satisfactorily meet pre-employment checks, including at least two (2) professional referees, a criminal records check, Victorian Working with Children Check, and proof of qualifications.

The successful applicant will initially be engaged for a probationary period of six (6) months. A probationary review before six (6) months will be undertaken.

Organisational vehicles are available for authorised use and are to be used at all times for work-related purposes in accordance with the organisation's Motor Vehicle Policy. For this reason, it is a requirement that all employees hold a current driver's licence whilst employed with the agency.

In the event of an internal application, accrued leave entitlements will be carried over.

APPLICATION PROCEDURES:

Junction Support Services does not bind itself to make any appointment whatsoever from applications received.

Applications **must include:**

- covering letter;
- statements addressing each of the selection criteria points (found above);
- resume/CV detailing employment history;
- completed Reference Checks form (within this employment pack) providing the names and contact numbers of three professional referees (include current and previous employers) who can provide comment on work performance.

Applications must be received at Junction Support Services by **5.00pm, Monday 20th February 2012**, in an envelope marked CONFIDENTIAL and addressed to:

Celestine Willmott
Recruitment Officer
Junction Support Services
PO Box 1490
Wodonga VIC 3689

or emailed to:

celestine.willmott@junction.org.au

Agency information, assistance with writing applications, JSS' police check policy, and any necessary forms can also be found on the organisation's website - www.chss.net.au .

Alternatively, please contact Celestine Willmott, Recruitment Officer, for more information – 02 6043 7434

Applicants invited to attend an interview must bring to the interview their original certificate as proof of qualification.

Junction Support Services is an equal employment opportunity employer.