

<b>POSITION TITLE:</b>	Senior Advocate, Child Protection Early Intervention Unit		
<b>REPORTS TO:</b>	Manager, Independent Mental Health Advocacy		
<b>PROGRAM AREA:</b>	Civil Justice	<b>LOCATION:</b>	Melbourne
<b>CLASSIFICATION:</b>	VLA4	<b>POSITION TYPE:</b>	Maximum Term Contract – 3 years

## POSITION SUMMARY

To supervise a team of advocates to deliver high-quality non-legal advocacy services to families involved in the child protection system. The role also involves providing advocacy services including information about people’s rights and the system, supporting people to enact those rights using self-advocacy strategies, and making referrals to legal and non-legal services. The focus will be assisting families prior to the commencement of proceedings.

The Child Protection Legal Aid Services Review identified the need for early support for families involved in the child protection system. Victoria Legal Aid’s existing Independent Mental Health Advocacy (IMHA) service provides strong evidence of the benefits of independent advocacy services. Building on the strengths of the IMHA service, the Child Protection Early Intervention Unit will provide non-legal advocacy services to families in the child protection system. The service is a 3-year pilot and will prioritise working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and parents with an intellectual disability.

## RESPONSIBILITIES

1. Provide high quality advocacy services by:
  - a. Listening, clarifying and understanding what the family wants.
  - b. Assisting the family to understand their rights, the processes available to exercise these rights and the potential impacts of their choices.
  - c. Supporting the family to self-advocate, or as directed, represent their views or preferences to others.
  - d. Make referrals to legal and non-legal services required by the family.
2. Provide day-to-day supervision to non-legal advocates delivering high quality advocacy services to families involved in the child protection system.
3. Support advocates by:
  - a. Monitoring and managing workload and caseload issues.
  - b. Supervision including coaching and mentoring to support individual and team performance and development.
  - c. Ensuring appropriate debriefing practices to support staff health and wellbeing.
4. Collaborate with the manager to ensure the successful delivery and evaluation of the pilot Early Intervention Unit in the designated locations, including contributing to the development and review of policies, procedures and guidelines as well as evaluation.

## RESPONSIBILITIES

5. Support the manager in positive stakeholder engagement within the relevant regions by building trusting relationships with families and organisations to ensure family's needs are at the centre of service delivery.
6. Work with the manager IMHA to lead public promotion and education to assist internal and external stakeholders to understand the service and the role of an advocate.
7. Participate in and contribute to individual and team professional development and keep up to date with relevant policies, legislation and maintain an understanding of issues impacting the broader child protection sector.
8. Collaborate with other VLA staff and contribute to the VLA strategy and other broader organisational forums, projects and event, including the Child Protection Transformation team.

## KEY SELECTION CRITERIA

### **Skills**

1. Ability to supervise, mentor and train staff and contribute to the development of individuals and their knowledge and skills in support of the service and its work.
2. Experience working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and/or adults with intellectual disabilities, particularly within the child protection system.
3. Excellent interpersonal and communication skills, and a demonstrated ability to influence and negotiate with people across all levels of the organisation and with external stakeholders to create win/win solutions.
4. Understands, communicates and manages the scope and complexities of the advocacy role, using a methodical approach to managing workloads and associated stressors.

### **Knowledge**

5. Knowledge and experience of the child protection system and other relevant service sectors; and understands relevant policy and legal frameworks.
6. Knowledge and experience working with people who experience disadvantage and providing advocacy and coaching for self-advocacy to families.
7. Demonstrated knowledge of and commitment to social justice principles, understanding of the legal and non-legal sectors and a commitment to VLA's vision and values.

## QUALIFICATIONS/ EXPERIENCE

- Significant experience in social work, community development, community sector advocacy, social work, child protection or family support service provision or other similar fields (mandatory)
- Experience in people management and leadership of a small team (mandatory)
- Post-secondary qualification (certificate, diploma or degree) in a relevant field such as social work, health, community development (highly desirable)
- Lived experience of the child protection system (desirable)

## OTHER RELEVANT INFORMATION

- To be eligible to apply for this position you must be an Australian or New Zealand citizen, permanent resident or hold a valid work permit or visa.
- You may be required to consent to a police check. Please note that people with criminal records are not automatically prevented from applying for this position and each application will be considered on its merits.
- You will be required to undergo or hold a current Working with Children Check.
- From time to time you will be required to travel between various office locations to deliver quality services to our clients or for professional development.
- This position may require you to independently travel to outreach services, meetings and between pilot sites.
- This position will have up to two direct reports.

## ORGANISATIONAL CONTEXT

In September 2017 VLA released the [Final Report](#) of its Child Protection Review. The Review was undertaken to bring about child protection legal services that are timely and appropriate; better at supporting children, particularly those at risk of long term disadvantage; more consistent across the state; and of higher quality. VLA committed to 36 actions for change set out in the Final Report. One outcome of this review is a 3 year pilot of the Child Protection Early Intervention Unit and this senior position within the new team will report to the Manager, Independent Mental Health Advocacy.

Independent Mental Health Advocacy (IMHA) is a state-wide non-legal advocacy service for people subject to compulsory treatment in Victoria. IMHA was established to support people to be involved in decisions related to their mental health treatment and recovery and to express their views and preferences. IMHA provides people with information about their rights, the mental health system and options; coaching for self-advocacy; advocacy and referrals to legal and non-legal services. IMHA has teams of advocates in four VLA offices: Melbourne, Geelong, Dandenong and Bendigo and outreaches to all designated mental health services in Victoria. IMHA is part of Civil Justice Mental Health and Disability Advocacy Program.

The Child Protection Early Intervention Unit will work closely with VLA's Family, Youth and Children's Law (FYCL) Program which assists people to resolve their family disputes to achieve safe, workable and child-focused parenting and care arrangements. FYCL also assist parents to build their capacity to resolve future disputes without legal assistance. The FYCL Program is responsible for the delivery of services across five subprograms:

- Child Protection
- Family Violence
- Family Law Services (including to parents in parenting and property disputes and as Independent Children's Lawyers)
- Child Support
- Family Dispute Resolution Service (VLA's lawyer-assisted family dispute resolution service).

## OUR VISION & VALUES

### Our vision

A fair and just society where rights and responsibilities are upheld.

### Our purpose

To make a difference in the lives of our clients and for the community by:

## OUR VISION & VALUES

- resolving and preventing legal problems.
- encouraging a fair and transparent justice system.

### Our values

#### *Fair*

We stand up for what is fair.

We aim to be fair when making choices about who and how we help people.

#### *Care*

We care about our clients and the community in which we live.

We look out for and take care of each other.

#### *Courage*

We act with courage backed by evidence about what is best for clients and the community.

We act with courage to be the best we can be.

***VLA is an Equal Opportunity Employer and is committed to promoting a diverse and inclusive workforce. We encourage Indigenous Australians and people from culturally diverse backgrounds to apply for positions within our organisation. We will make reasonable adjustment where possible for people with disabilities.***

*Position description authorised by Resourcing & Remuneration Manager.*

Signed:



Date: 23/5/18