

Peer support worker ITALY

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Peer Support Workers as an Innovative force in
Advocacy in dementia care



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PSW in Italy

In Italy a peer-support worker cannot be employed *as such* in the care sector. He/she would have to comply to the other regulations for care workers, meaning that:

- He/she will have to have a VET qualification as social-health care support worker (OSS) to be employed in formal services such as residential care, day care or home-care services
- He / she won't need any formal qualification to be employed as domestic care worker by individuals (older persons or someone from his/her household).

Because of this, we don't consider useful for the Italian context to provide a dedicated VET training for peer-support workers.



PSW in Italy

On the other hand, in Emilia Romagna region we have several programmes employing PSW as volunteers in the following sectors:

Mental Health

Disability (including carers of people with disabilities)

Dementia (informal carers)

In the mental health field, where experiences are more developed, there have been training for PSWs providing the formal VET qualification of “guidance counsellor” after 200h of formal training.

Contents: management of the help relationship, analysis of user needs and requirements, management and enhancement of user resources, management of active interviews (effective communication, active listening, assertiveness), motivational approach in the contexts that support change, user support for a better perception of themselves and their pathology, support for the user in making decisions and autonomous resolution of problems, as well as privacy management.



Role of informal carers are PSW in dementia

- ✓ Welcoming informal carers and providing basic information when accessing services
- ✓ Peer-support / mentoring / be-friending
- ✓ Motivation / empowerment / self-management
- ✓ Contributing to policy making and training with an advisory role

Proposal for PIA

A training programme not aimed to release a formal qualification but introducing (max 16 H):

- ✓ Dementia and its impact
- ✓ Role of the PSW
- ✓ Help relationship & motivating for change
- ✓ Accepting that there are problems that can not be solved / coping strategies
- ✓ Elaborating and sharing own experience in policy contexts
- ✓ Elaborating and sharing own experience in a relationship with another carer

Include as much as possible practical activities rather than a lot of theory (i.e. exercises based on principles of narrative medicine, storytelling & in-group social learning; self-reflection / reflective practices / active listening / role playing).