



Training Consultative Group (Queensland)

Training Policy and Description of Courses

- Revised September 2013 -

Introduction

1. The Training & Information Program (TIP) operates as a partnership between the Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA) and Ex Service Organisation's (ESO). It maintains a platform of Welfare and Compensation training for ESO practitioners (volunteers & paid). The training is complemented by each Organisation providing on-the-job experience and mentoring post course to ensure the competency of their practitioners.
2. The TIP policy, protocols, training modules and core knowledge are managed by a National TIP Executive, comprising ESO and DVA representatives from all States.
3. States utilise Training and Consultative Groups (TCG) to manage and supervise the program. TCG's are made up of training orientated ESO members and DVA representatives who work together to achieve the objectives and goals of the Training and Information Program.
4. The TCG has an Executive to manage the day to day operation of TIP in Queensland.
5. TCG appointed ESO Members & TIP ESO Representatives act as a "point of contact" for all communications between their organisations and TIP administration in Queensland.
6. Where there is no TCG member appointed, contact shall be through that Organisation's nominated TIP Representative.
7. In Queensland, a team of ESO and DVA trainers prepare and deliver the training.

Training

8. TIP has three streams of training:-
 - a. Compensation entitlement and enhancement courses
 - b. Welfare and Support courses
 - c. Information Seminars and training up-datesTIP training progresses through four levels, from basic, through to tribunal advocacy (Level 1 thru to Level 4).

Who can attend TIP Training in Queensland

9. The TIP (Qld) TCG has, as a matter of policy, set the following criteria for individuals who wish to attend training:-
 - They must be endorsed by a bona fide ESO as an 'Authorised Practitioner/Trainee' assisting Veterans, Serving & Ex-Serving members of the Australian Defence

Force (ADF), Serving and Ex-Serving ADF Reservists, Cadets, including Officers' & Instructors, Declared Persons and eligible Dependants.

- The ESO & the Practitioner, by participating in TIP training, undertake to abide by the TIP Code of Ethics.
- The ESO is a member of the Veterans' Indemnity & Training Association (VITA), or has alternative Professional Indemnity Insurance cover for their practitioners.
- Other persons may attend training by invitation from TIP (Qld) TCG.

Training Criteria

10. Training criteria/prerequisites are contained in this document and include TIP Certificate requirements for Levels 1 to 4.
11. Training progression through the levels is designed to produce effective Practitioners.
12. Endorsement of any applicant, who does not possess the required prerequisites for the nominated course, absolves TIP of any responsibility to deliver effective training to that individual.

Nomination Procedure

13. The following procedures are to be complied with when nominating for participation in TIP (Qld) training:-
 - Applications are only accepted on the TIP Qld form, fully completed.
 - The sponsoring ESO's name and contact details need to be provided.
 - The Application Form **must be completed** by an ESO office bearer, if the office bearer is applying for a course, then another office bearer must sponsor him/her.
 - The submission to TIP Qld. of the application form automatically acknowledges the trainee's status as an 'Authorised Practitioner' of the sponsoring Organisation.
 - Application forms may be faxed, posted or saved and emailed to TIP (Qld).
 - Incomplete or illegible application forms cannot be processed or acknowledged.
 - Applications close **four (4) weeks** prior to the date of the nominated training event.
 - The organisation and the trainee are advised of course acceptance when the applications close for that particular training event.
 - Inability to attend should be advised as soon as possible by ringing 07 3358 5845 or emailing <tip.qld@bigpond.com> so as to enable reserve applicants to participate.

Note: The non-compliance of these procedures may result in failure to gain acceptance for training or a position on a course.

Recognition of Attendance

14. Qualification or accreditation **is not** provided to persons attending TIP training courses. As a "niche" training provider TIP has no authority to do so.
15. Organisations are advised on the performance of their Practitioners through the participant's sponsor, as listed on the application form.
16. Mentoring, on job training, scheduling refresher training and nominating Practitioners for courses is the responsibility of individual organisations.
17. During courses, teach-back, workshops and open book quiz sessions are used for knowledge verification by trainers.
18. Certificates of attendance, where applicable, are sent to participants.
19. Level 4 Tribunal Advocacy course participants may receive a Certificate from the University of Canberra on successful completion.

Contact

20. For enquiries and information please contact:-

DVA TIP Co-ordinator
Level 12
300 La Trobe St
MELBOURNE VIC 3000

- Phone: (03) 9284 6801
- 1300 363 475 3 6801
- Fax: (03) 9602 5709
- Email: gail.zanetti@dva.gov.au

TRAINING COURSE APPLICATIONS when completed to:

Administration Officer TIP (QLD)
GPO BOX 45
NEW FARM QLD 4006

- Phone: (07) 3358 5845
- Fax : (07) 3358 5809
- Email: tip.qld@bigpond.com

Description of Queensland Training

Introduction

TIP's stated purpose is to train volunteers from bona fide ESO's to assist Veterans, serving and ex-serving members of the permanent and reserve forces, cadets, officers of cadets, other persons nominated by the Australian Government and their dependants to access benefits and services from DVA. It does not provide training which is available from other institutions or organisations, does not provide community welfare training and it is classed as a "niche trainer" in Veterans' Affairs information and legislation.

Organisations decide the suitability or otherwise of their volunteer practitioners to assist clients. TIP provides feedback at the completion of training, to assist Organisations with their assessment and/or employment processes leading to accreditation of their practitioners.

TIP maintains National core knowledge packages for its courses, there is a national review, update and amendment system in place to ensure consistency and accuracy of TIP training throughout Australia.

Welfare Training

Welfare courses in Queensland are given high priority; they are the starting point in our strategy of training ESO practitioners in Veterans' Affairs practices, procedures and services. It matters not what the ultimate goal of the practitioner is, from visiting Veterans in hospitals or advocating for them in the courts, the starting point is the welfare course.

The majority of the subject matter presented during 3 days of welfare training is generally not repeated in any other Queensland TIP course and includes:

- a. Introduction to the benefits and services DVA provides
- b. The role and responsibilities of the practitioner and the ESO
- c. Veterans Indemnity & Training Association (VITA)
- d. The role of TIP as a "niche" trainer
- e. Bereavement and War Graves Commemoration

- f. Ethics, credibility & fraud
- g. The rights of the volunteer
- h. The commitment and skills required of a welfare practitioner
- i. Burnout and networking
- j. Interviewing skills & dealing with veterans
- k. Compensation, income support and pensions

Other government departments and agencies present sessions covering their function and the services they provide to the Veteran community such as VVCS, Centerlink and The Public Trustee.

The Queensland Department of Justice and Attorney General and the Department of Defence provide services, where these affect Veterans, they are examined & discussed.

Other Veterans' matters including honours and awards, eulogies, obtaining histories, personal files, FOI, POI and protocols involved with the funerals of Veterans and other defence force orientated memorial services and war graves are dealt with.

Many of the sessions have practical workshops and throughout the course the participants' awareness of the presented subject matter is evaluated by trainers using "open book" quizzes, individual and group problem solving and teachback sessions. At the completion of the Queensland Consolidated (L1 & L2) Welfare Course, participants are considered at Level 2 on the national scale. There are no prerequisites for attendance.

E-learning Welfare Training

Online equivalent to the welfare course described above, but is a national course. In other words the same course is available in all states, so it does not contain any local content. It consists of a set of online modules that are accessed via an internet address, user name and password, provided after the specific E-Learning Application is received. This is followed by a 2 day classroom phase at a location and time to be advised. After successful completion of the classroom phase a certificate will be issued in the normal manner. Note that the TIP Certificate and NOT the certificate online, is the only document recognised by VITA. There are no prerequisites for this course.

Level 1 Compensation Course

Designed both as an initial course for Practitioners who have previously completed a welfare course and as a refresher course for practicing compensation claims officers. In other words it assumes a basic knowledge of DVA benefits and services plus an understanding of the ESO/ADF community. An individual undertaking this course directly "off the street", would have difficulties with some of the subject matter.

Training takes place over 3 days and participants are trained to prepare basic claims under the 3 main heads of legislation. The outcomes of the course include an expectation that participants will understand the basic DVA requirements to achieve a successful compensation claim outcome. The course does not deal with multi-legislation eligibility or complex claims, rather it concentrates on getting the basics right. It establishes a foundation for future work with cases that are extremely complicated and should only be attempted after higher level training and extensive claims experience. Unfortunately much of the work of L3 advocates is clearing up cases where a primary claim has been submitted which contained very basic errors, either by the Veteran or an untrained helper.

Participants are informed of the legislative background and history behind rehabilitation and compensation entitlements including Widow/er and Dependents benefits under the:

- a. Veterans Entitlement Act 1986 (VEA)
- b. Military Rehabilitation & Compensation Act 2004 (MRCA)
- c. Safety Rehabilitation & Compensation Act 1988 (SRCA),
- d. Defence Act 1903

Other subject matter designed to assist Practitioners includes presentations on:

- a. The code of ethics, fraud and credibility
- b. Interview skills and basic record keeping

- c. The Veterans Indemnity & Training Association (VITA)
- d. Rehabilitation processes and procedures
- e. Benefits available from other agencies (DFRDB, MSBS, Centerlink)
- f. Offsetting of pensions and payments
- g. Burnout, Networking and Volunteering
- h. Recognition and effective use of resources
- i. DVA practices, processes and procedures
- j. Compensation Claim review and appeal pathways

The course utilises practical workshops, individual and group teachback sessions, open book problem solving and quizzes to assist trainers in evaluating the effectiveness & retention of the training material by participants. Completion of L2 welfare training is a prerequisite of this course.

Advanced Compensation Level 2

There are three courses at this level of training for Practitioners classified suitable by their ESO to undertake more complex claims under the VEA, MRCA, and SRCA.

Mentoring and on-job training by the ESO, following completion of a Basic Compensation Course should provide the necessary foundation for this higher level of training.

VEA, MRCA and SRCA legislation courses of 2 days each are conducted in Queensland. Apart from the inclusion of some basic advocacy skills in the subject matter, these courses have identical content, albeit more in depth than a Level 1 Compensation Course. The advocacy skills content introduces practitioners to the concept of challenging DVA decisions; gives them an overview of the review system and insight into the skills required of a TIP trained advocate (Level 3). To reiterate, there are three separate courses of two days duration which complete TIP Qld. Level 2 compensation training.

Practitioners successfully completing these courses are **NOT** qualified to appeal cases to the VRB, rather they may assist in preparation of cases for appeal by Level 3 trained advocates. The preparation of more complex claims and multiple legislation eligibility, along with mentoring and supervising Level 1 practitioners is the primary objective of the Level 2 compensation course. Continuing the ESO mentoring process and further on-job experience at Level 2 may lead to the practitioner undertaking the Level 3 Advocacy Course.

Practical workshops, individual and group teachback sessions, open book problem solving, quizzes and mock appeals/reviews are evaluation tools used by trainers during the three courses. ESO's are free to choose which course their practitioners undertake i.e. VEA, SRCA or MRCA. TIP recommends completion of these courses every 2 to 3 years to maintain currency with the legislations. Completion of L2 welfare and L1 compensation courses are prerequisites of these courses, these three L2 courses may be completed in any order.

Level 3 Advocacy Course

Designed to take experienced Level 2 Compensation Practitioners to the higher skills arena of advocacy. The TIP use of the term "TIP Advocate" is part of a graded four level training system and implies a level of knowledge and experience commensurate with effectively presenting cases to the VRB (level 3), the AAT and higher (level 4). This should not be confused with the common use of the term whereby anybody may "advocate" on another persons behalf, not necessarily having the training to do so.

The course is held over a 5 day period, participants are only required to attend 3 days. A selection process is conducted prior to practitioners being accepted, trainers make assessments and recommendations during and post course. These are consolidated and reviewed before advising the sponsor named on the course application about the performance of their Practitioner. Certificates of attendance are sent separately to each participant. A pre-course package including a case study is sent to each participant and completion of this assignment is mandatory for commencement of the formal course.

Practicing Advocates who are refreshing at Compensation Level 3 may present their assignment case on day 1 of the course, if successful and our trainers are satisfied the Advocate's knowledge

is in compliance of L3 standards, they are not required to participate any further in the course, unless they wish to enhance their knowledge.

The objective here is to teach advocacy skills, not heads of legislation; therefore it is vitally important participants are **experienced Level 2** compensation claims officers who have on-job experience in complex claims involving multiple legislation and eligibility.

There are sessions to confirm the knowledge accumulated since compensation training at level 2 and evaluate the on job-training carried out by the parent ESO. Sessions include:

- a. Investigative skills
- b. Gathering evidence
- c. Presentation skills
- d. Decision making processes
- e. Structuring submissions
- f. Case law, precedents and their use
- g. Types of Hearings and Processes
- h. Forms and documents in use
- i. Structuring persuasive arguments
- j. Proofing witnesses
- k. Duties and responsibilities of the TIP trained advocate
- n. VRB practices, procedures and protocols

Extensive validation and knowledge assessment is conducted at each stage of the course and participants are required to present their assigned case to a mock board during the course. Completion of a L2 welfare, L1 and L2 (all three legislations) compensation courses are prerequisites for this course

Tribunal Advocacy (TAC) Level 4

Designed for very experienced and proficient TIP Advocates who are invited to attend a six day residential course under the auspices of the University of Canberra. It is organised and manned by TIP National Office, the limited places are called for annually and are selected by National Office from candidates put forward by each state TIP Chairman, on advice from their state selection panel.

TAC is designed to teach candidates the processes, protocols and procedures required to take cases to the Administrative Appeals Tribunal (AAT), Veterans division. It is very intensive and requires a high level of knowledge and understanding of DVA compensation legislations, practices, procedural requirements and the appeals system.

On successful completion a certificate is issued by the University. A one day TAC refresher course may be scheduled annually if a requirement arises; expressions of interest for both are usually called for in January each year. Extensive training and experience which includes all L1, L2 and L3 TIP courses are prerequisites for this training.

Information Seminars

Information seminars are designed to supplement the knowledge of ESO Practitioners as required. They may be used by the ESO to refine the training of their practitioners according to the employment requirements of specific positions the ESO has in place. As a general rule these courses are not a requirement for VITA insurance coverage. Attendance is up to individuals and organisations seeking to expand or enhance their knowledge of Veterans' Affairs matters. No prerequisites apply to these seminars and attendance to refresh previous attendance is welcome. At this point the seminars available in Queensland are:

- a. Income Support - ½ day
- b. Veterans Vocational Rehabilitation Scheme - ½ day
- c. Electronic Tools - 1 day
- d. VPAD user - 1 day

Conclusion

The above is an overview of TIP Queensland policy, practices, procedures and a description of the courses currently offered to ESOs. The employment of Practitioners is a matter for the ESO. The combination of courses and seminars can form the basis for the specific job an ESO has for each of their Practitioners. The compliance with the insurance requirements of VITA is straightforward and refresher training should be undertaken on a regular basis, within appropriate time frames. It is worthy of note that the further one is away from formal TIP training, the harder it becomes to demonstrate currency for VITA professional liability insurance purposes.

Enquiries on all matters involving TIP in Queensland may be directed, in the first instance to the DVA TIP Co-Ordinator. Any enquiries involving course applications or lodging same should go to the TIP (Qld) Administration Officer, contact details are listed on page 3.

Dennis J Roles OAM
Chairman
TIP Queensland
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