



# Ankali Volunteer Handbook

## Introduction:

Thank you for your interest in becoming a volunteer with the Ankali Project. The areas covered in this guide make up some of the more frequently asked questions by new volunteers. If you still have questions after reading through this booklet, please call the Project and ask to speak to one of the staff. We appreciate and value your commitment to making a difference by joining Ankali. Remember, the crisis is not over and we continue to need people just like you.

## Q. When and why did Ankali begin?

The Ankali Project (pronounced *an-car-lee*) was established in 1985 in response to the overwhelming emotional support needs of people being diagnosed with AIDS (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome). The name "Ankali" is believed to originate from an aboriginal word meaning "Friend". The Project is a division of the Albion Street Centre and is funded by the NSW Health Department.

In the time since Ankali began, more than 1600 volunteers have provided emotional support to over 1500 clients. Without the dedication and commitment of our many volunteers, this would not have been possible.

## Q. What does the Ankali Project do?

The Ankali Project provides a range of services to **People Living with HIV/AIDS (PLWHA)**. The main support service is the volunteer project. Volunteers (people just like you) are matched with clients on a one-to-one basis over a short or long term period. Other services provided by the Project include counselling and psychotherapy that is provided by trained clinical staff, and client referral services.

### Q. Is the Project run by volunteers?

No. The staffs at the Project are fully trained social workers, psychologists and health educators.

### Q. Does Ankali look for a particular "type" of person?

No. There is no such thing as a "typical" Ankali volunteer. Volunteers generally range in age from the mid-twenties through to their late seventies. People in the Project come from a wide variety of backgrounds (including employment, sexuality, religious/spiritual beliefs, and cultural). In fact, it is this diversity that helps make the Project so successful. We don't look for a particular "type" of person, rather we look for people from all walks of life who can be **non-judgemental**, and who can make a commitment to join the Project for at least 6 months.

### Q. What does an Ankali volunteer do?

Your main role as an Ankali volunteer is to provide emotional support to someone living with, or someone affected by HIV/AIDS. This can take place in a number of different ways. Sometimes your client will use you as a sounding board to talk about what's happening in their life. This is very important for many of our clients.

However, quite often many clients require **social support**. This can take place by going to a movie together, going for a coffee, or doing an activity that you both enjoy. You may find that your client does not always want to talk about major issues. Providing people with a "break" from talking about HIV can be a very important part of their support.

### Q. How much time is involved?

When you become a volunteer, we ask that you be available to your client for a maximum of 5 hours a week. You might find that your client does not need you for this amount of time. But if things change in their life and they need more support, part of your commitment is to be there.

You will also be required to attend a volunteer support group for one hour a week. This is explained a bit further on.

**Q. What if I can't give five hours a week to my client?**

This is not actually as hard as it sounds. Firstly, you may be matched with a client who does not need 5 hours a week. In fact, a lot of our clients don't require this much contact a week on an ongoing basis. Secondly, the time you spend supporting your client is more likely to be a mixture of phone contact as well as face-to-face (phone contact can be very helpful for many clients).

We realise there is no rigid framework when it comes to providing someone with emotional support. It is about both you and your client communicating and being flexible with each other in order for both of you to have a positive experience from this relationship.

**Q. Do I have to be available during the day?**

No, but it would be a definite plus to some of our clients if you do have daytime availability.

A lot of volunteers with Ankali work full-time and have other commitments in their life. The majority of our clients prefer to have someone outside of work hours as a lot of services are available to them during these times. Other clients may work full-time, and find it helpful to have contact outside of normal business hours.

**Q. What happens if I can't keep up the commitment?**

Sometimes you might find that things happen in your own life and it is difficult to keep supporting your client. We always try to be flexible and understanding, so please talk to one of the staff about this.

**Q. Do I need to be a trained counsellor?**

We don't expect you to be a counsellor. Your "non-clinical" role can be very important to the person you are supporting. By listening to and talking with your client as they share things with you can go a long way in making them feel understood. Don't worry too much about this though, we cover the different aspects of your role in detail during your training. You will be given the opportunity to learn the skills to respond appropriately (don't panic! the more you practice, the easier it becomes).

### Q. Will I be matched straight after training?

It is possible, but it's also likely that you will be unmatched for a period of time. Nevertheless, even as an unmatched volunteer, you will still have a very important role to play in the Project. We will explain this in greater detail during your training.

### Q. What type of client will I be matched with?

Our clients are people who are living with HIV/AIDS (PLWHA). The project also provides support to partners, family members and friends of people who have an AIDS diagnosis (The difference between HIV and AIDS will be talked about during the training). As a volunteer you may be supporting a client who is HIV positive, but remains physically well; or you could be supporting a client who has AIDS and who needs support around the changes that are occurring in their life. Alternatively, you might be supporting someone who is HIV negative, but this person is a close loved one of someone who has AIDS.

Like our volunteers, Ankali clients come from all walks of life, with different backgrounds and life experiences.

### Q. Will I get support from Ankali?

Most definitely. We believe that you need support and feedback in the work you do with your client. This takes place in two ways:

Firstly, you will be placed in a group with other volunteers. You will meet for one hour a week to talk about how things are going for you. Two experienced volunteer group leaders, who have received additional training, will facilitate your group. This group is the most effective way for you to talk confidentially about how things are going in your client relationship. This is an opportunity for you to ask questions, get feedback, and to support other volunteers in your group. Current Ankali volunteers find their group extremely beneficial and helpful.

Secondly, each member of staff is responsible for supervising a number of the volunteer support groups. Your staff coordinator will be available to you outside of the group if you require additional support.

## Q. How do I become an Ankali Volunteer?

There are four basic steps involved in becoming a volunteer:

**Step 1)** Read the information guide. You're almost there with this step.

**Step 2)** You now need to complete the attached application form. Please read this form carefully and complete all the questions. Once you have completed your application, please send it back to us. **ALL** applications are treated with the strictest of confidence and you will receive written notification of its receipt.

**Step 3)** You will be contacted to attend an informal interview with one of the staff coordinators. This is important as it allows you an opportunity to find out more about us and for us to find out more about you.

**Step 4)** The final step in becoming a volunteer is to attend one of the training programs. We are currently running three training programs a year. It is important that you attend the entire training, which is run over two weekends (usually consecutive weekends - but not always). The letter you receive confirming your application tells you the dates of the next training program. If you find that you cannot attend on those dates due to other commitments, just talk to one of the staff members who can inform you of future dates that might be more suitable.

The training program is designed to provide you with a good understanding of the many issues that people living with HIV/AIDS may be dealing with. The training uses "formal" presentation methods, along with experiential sessions. The aim of the experiential sessions is to provide you with some hands-on experience before you take on a client.

Thanks for taking the time to read this booklet, we hope to receive your application in the near future and look forward to having you join our volunteer team. Remember, if you have any questions, please call us and talk to one of our staff coordinators.

**As a requirement of South Eastern Sydney Area Health Service and to ensure the safety of our clients, all volunteers will be required to undergo a Criminal Record Check.**

**THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION IS CONFIDENTIAL AND VIEWED ONLY BY ANKALI STAFF. THIS INFORMATION IS REQUIRED TO ASSIST STAFF IN MATCHING VOLUNTEERS WITH CLIENTS OF THE PROJECT.**

Given Names: \_\_\_\_\_ Family Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Preferred Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Email Address \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Suburb : \_\_\_\_\_ Postcode: \_\_\_\_\_

Home: \_\_\_\_\_ Work: \_\_\_\_\_ Mobile: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Birth: \_\_\_\_\_ Gender: \_\_\_\_\_ Age: \_\_\_\_\_

How do you identify your sexuality at this point in time?  
(i.e., gay, lesbian, heterosexual, etc)? \_\_\_\_\_

Occupation: \_\_\_\_\_ Full-time / Part-time (*please circle one*)

Are you currently studying? \_\_\_\_\_ Where? \_\_\_\_\_

Name of course: \_\_\_\_\_

How did you hear about the Ankali Project ? \_\_\_\_\_

Have you been a volunteer before? \_\_\_\_\_ Where ? \_\_\_\_\_

In what capacity ? \_\_\_\_\_ How long where you a volunteer? \_\_\_\_\_

Are you a smoker ? Yes / No (*please circle one*)

Do you have access to a car ? Yes / No (*please circle one*)

First Language ? \_\_\_\_\_ Other Languages (*including sign language*): \_\_\_\_\_

Interests / hobbies: \_\_\_\_\_

Have you had any exposure / experience with alternative health systems (i.e. naturopathy, herbal medicine, Reiki, etc)? Yes / No (*please circle one*) \_\_\_\_\_

Are you grieving a death that has occurred in the last 12 months ? Yes / No (*please circle one*)

**In a minimum of one page (you may write more than one page), please tell us why you want to be an emotional support volunteer. Please cover the following points.**

- **Any personal experience with illness and the effect it has had on you.**
- **Any personal experience with grief**
- **Your feelings about HIV/AIDS and the impact on your life.**
- **Are you concerned about contracting HIV by working with people who are HIV positive ?**
- **The kinds of clients you anticipate the most difficult working with and why (e.g. clients with drug & alcohol issues: clients with mental illness: etc.)**
- **Would you have any difficulty supporting a client who appears physically well, but is in need of companionship ?**
- **The source of emotional support in your life ?**
- **Your spiritual/religious background, beliefs and practices – if any.**
- **Your feeling about a six month commitment.**
- **Anything else you want us to know.**

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Please return your completed application, essay and a photo of yourself to: Ankali Project  
150 Albion St  
Surry Hills NSW 2010