

Information for prospective members of the Therapeutic Community

Related policy: Service Delivery - Evidence-Based Client Service Delivery (SDP10)

Hope Springs Community Farm is a community for individuals committed to making lasting and sustainable change in their life. It is important that prospective community members consider all the information in this document before making a decision about joining the program.

The long term residential program is based on a therapeutic community model, where the “*community itself, through self-help and mutual support, is the principal means for promoting personal change*” and community members, both staff and residents, contribute “*to a psychologically and physically safe learning environment where change can occur.*” (Australasian Therapeutic Communities Association). Through daily living, interaction, work, and responsibilities, community members learn to live a fulfilling and productive life, based on healthy relationships and meaningful participation in family and community, free from dependence on alcohol or other drugs.

THE ASSESSMENT PROCESS

Information session

The first part of the process is an information session where you and a counsellor from HOPE’s assessment team talk about what you want from recovery and whether Hope Springs Community Farm is the best place to provide that. If after this session, you and the counsellor agree that Hope Springs Community Farm could be a good option for you, then the assessment can begin.

Assessment

The assessment itself will take more than one session. There is some paperwork to do. Some of the questions are personal and they might feel uncomfortable to answer but it is important we have all the information we need to make good decisions about your recovery together. We will ask you for information about how you manage your physical and mental health, as well as any legal, financial, work or family commitments you need to attend to prior to joining the program. This helps us make a decision about offering you a place, and ensures that you have the best chance of being successful in your recovery.

Once we’ve finished all the paperwork, the assessment team will review your application and then contact you with an update. If, at this point in time, we decide that Hope Springs Community Farm is not the best place for you, we will work with you to look at what other options are available. If we decide the match between you and our program is suitable, you will need to complete a detox, and make pre-entry preparations.

Pre-entry preparation

You may be asked to wait until your commitments are complete, to allow you to focus on your recovery once you join the program. You may be asked to undertake some actions to help prepare you for the program, e.g., if you smoke, you will be asked to stop smoking. If you are taking certain medications (e.g., opiates, benzodiazepines, amphetamines), you will be asked to work with your doctor to find alternative ways to manage your physical or mental health. We have found that it is helpful if you have a keyworker or support person to assist you with pre-entry preparations. During this preparatory time, we will keep in contact with you.

Induction

There will be an induction period at Rosella House in Geraldton that provides an opportunity for you and us to get to know each other better, and to allow you to settle into the program. If we decide that you are not be ready to join the community at Hope Springs, we will discuss alternative recovery options with you.

Non-contact period

The early stage of your program includes a non-contact period of four weeks, where you have no contact with family or friends to allow you to focus on your recovery as you settle into the program.



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WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW NOW ABOUT THE PROGRAM

It is smoke free.

There is no smoking allowed on the premises. You cannot leave the premises to smoke, and we cannot drive you anywhere to smoke. We can assist you to work out how to manage this, e.g., with a QUIT program, nicotine replacement patches, etc.

There are no mobile phones.

We have found from experience that when people have access to mobile phones, they are distracted from participating fully in the program. Phone contact with family members is allowed on Sunday afternoons only, using the landline, with a staff member present. If you have children under 16, we will need to discuss how you plan to communicate with them. You will be encouraged to write letters to family members.

Personal shopping is not permitted.

During your time in the program, you will have access to everything you need. However, you may be living with less “stuff” than you are accustomed to. Our policies on shopping are designed to help you focus on your own journey of recovery without too many distractions. We will provide you with a list of essentials to bring with you. You will be able to place orders for personal hygiene items such as toothpaste or soap, which will be purchased for you by staff during regular shopping for the program.

You are never alone.

The therapeutic community supports members by ensuring no-one is alone. “Alone time” is minimal - if at all - in the early stages of your program. “Free time” is spent doing things together with other residents and will be planned beforehand.

“Therapy” happens every day.

Therapy happens in the relationships you develop, in the work and social aspects of the program, and the relationships you already have with family, friends etc. Some residential rehab programs offer structured group and individual therapy. While group and individual therapy are part of the program at Hope Springs Community Farm, they are not the only nor the main space where “therapy” happens.

The therapeutic community is a mirror of life, where you work, you play, you struggle, you cry, and you celebrate. While the environment at the Farm is safe and nurturing, it is also a place where emotions will be uncomfortable; you will struggle to like all the people around you all the time; and you will want to leave because of the discomfort. It is in these times of anger, sadness, fear, loneliness, or hopelessness, with supportive conversations from those around you (staff and residents), that change occurs and different ways of understanding problems and dealing with them is possible. With the help of people around you, you will make decisions that lead to change, leave you feeling satisfied, with a sense of achievement, and do not involve alcohol or other drugs to cope.

You will develop skills and understanding about how you relate to people in the work environment, and the importance of contributing to your life and the life of people around you. Family life, work life, school/education and friendships are valuable because of what they mean to us, what we contribute to each of them and the gains we experience, our accomplishments from being part of them. If you are seeking help, it is likely that in the majority of those areas - if not all of them - you have been experiencing problems.

Work skills training is central to the program.

At Hope Springs Community Farm, you are not a passive patient: you are a member of a community. This means you will be contributing to the farm and its social enterprises through daily activities, based on your capacity and needs. The range of activities is broad, and can be matched to level of health and fitness (as far as practicable). However, if you are unable or unwilling to participate in the work component of the program you will not be accepted into the community, and we will discuss alternative recovery options with you.

By learning new skills, you may discover a passion or talent you didn't know you had. You may decide you want to gain a qualification and change careers. You will also make mistakes, put yourself to the test, learn attention to detail and persistence, learn how to ask for help, and how to compromise and work in a group with varied personalities.

Although Hope Springs' social enterprises (such as bread) are designed to generate income for the program, they do not make a profit for Hope Community Services. All future income when enterprises become profitable will go to funding the program for you and others like you.

Be prepared to stay a while.

If you're considering a residential program, then alcohol or other drugs have been playing a big part in your life. Living life differently, without alcohol or other drugs, is not just about stopping use. Changing ways of doing things, changing your thinking, having the space to recover emotionally and physically takes time and effort.

Our experience and good practice shows that the longer people stay in the program the greater their chances of achieving long term recovery. While it varies for everyone, we know the best outcome for people wanting to make long term change is somewhere between one to two years. We will work with you to plan when you are ready to leave the program and return home or to a new place.

Visits home are only at the end stage of the program.

Giving yourself the space and time to recover means not taking leave to visit family or friends during the program. Except for truly exceptional circumstances, visits to family will be viewed as part of your transition out of the program, not taking place until at least the 9 month stage. Home visits are not seen as a "holiday" or "leave" from the program, but as a time to reflect on all that has been achieved and re-evaluate future plans. A visit home is when old triggers, situations and difficult dynamics will present themselves. When the time is right, based on your individual progress, we will begin discussing the supports we can put in place to help make the most of this time of growth. A number of trial visits may be necessary for you to decide what your next step in life will be after leaving the program. We encourage everyone to be present in the moment, and make the most of each day at Hope Springs Community Farm.

Family visits - Some residents may like to see their family whilst at Hope Springs Community Farm. We will consider this option with you, after you have been in the program for a few months. Contact with family will be at Hope Springs Community Farm, by arrangement. Leaving the farm to go into town with family or friends is not allowed.

Contact with family - We encourage letter writing as the main form of communication with loved ones. We have found that writing letters can be a very healthy way of healing relationships that may have been damaged or strained for many years. Letters will be checked for contraband but not read by staff.

Packages or gifts from family or friends - During your time with us, you will be able to receive packages from home with clothing/toiletry items (2-3 packages, depending on your length of stay). Envelopes containing books or magazines may always be sent from family or friends. Family can bring one gift each time they visit. Packages will be checked for contraband.

If you don't have clothes that are appropriate for working on the farm, and you don't have someone who can send any to you, we will provide you with clean, gently used clothing to wear at work. When you finish the program, you may like to donate some of your clothing for future community members.

Our Expectation

We expect you to abide by the program rules and guidelines. If you have any questions about any of our rules or practises, please feel free to ask for clarification or explanations during our information and assessment sessions.



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NEXT STEPS

After you have read this information, if you decide you would like to continue, you can make an appointment for the information session in the following manner:

- If you are in the Geraldton area, please contact Rosella House on 9921 7409 and ask to speak to staff in the assessment team. They will have a brief discussion with you and make an appointment for an information session for you.
- If you are in the Goldfields area please contact the Goldfields Community Alcohol & Drug Service and request an appointment with a counsellor for an information session about Hope Springs Community Farm. Kalgoorlie on 9021 3069. Esperance on 9071 5169.
- If you are in the Perth area, please contact HOPE's head office on 9497 9498 and request an appointment with a counsellor for an information session about Hope Springs Community Farm.
- If you are based elsewhere in the state, please call 9921 7409 to speak with a member of the assessment team and we can try to arrange a Skype session with you.

If you have ANY difficulties please call HOPE's head office on 9497 9498 and let reception staff know your concerns.

It is important that you are not under the influence of any substances when you present for the appointment. If it is difficult for you to do this then contact us and we can work out options to best fit in with your situation.

If you decide to go no further, it may still be helpful to have an appointment to look at options. Success happens in many ways, so congratulate yourself on getting this far. What you are considering is difficult and it is so important that you do not view it as failure.

We hope to hear from you!

The team at HOPE.