



Eli's Place Residential Treatment and Transition Centre

Work Team Lead - Position Profile

Eli's Place Residential Treatment and Transition Centre ("Eli's Place") exists because Ontario's mental health system, built around short stays, institutional settings and crisis response, cannot currently offer young adults with serious mental illness what they actually need — sustained recovery, resilience and the life skills to move forward. We are building something different. Canada's first long-term residential therapeutic community, where time, meaningful work and a sense of belonging are the conditions for recovery.



Eli's Place will provide long-term residential care for young adults aged 18 to 35 living with serious mental illness, on a 600-acre farm and conservation property north of Guelph. Guests live and work together as a therapeutic community, with individualized clinical care built alongside real, structured work in horticulture, conservation and land stewardship.

The Work Team Lead is a founding member of the Guest services team, working side by side with Guests across the property's fields, gardens and conservation lands, as well as indoors on food production, facility care and other practical work. This is where meaningful work becomes therapeutic, not through instruction from a distance, but through sustained presence alongside a Guest as they take on a task, struggle with it, and see it through. The Work Team Lead calibrates that work to what a Guest can manage on a given day, and carries what they observe back to the clinical team.

Eli's Place is pre-operational and on track to open in fall 2026. Founded over a decade ago by a family with lived experience of serious mental illness, the organization has spent years developing its model, securing its location and building the board, partnerships and funding foundation needed to launch. The Work Team Lead will join the team as it prepares to welcome its first Guests.



If this is the kind of work you have been looking for, we want to hear from you.

About Eli's Place

Eli's Place is a non-profit organization providing long-term residential care for young adults aged 18 to 35 living with serious mental illness. The program is not of a fixed duration, but responds to the therapeutic needs of each individual Guest. We anticipate that, on average, this will involve residential care of approximately six to nine months, integrating individualized clinical treatment, structured meaningful work and community living within a therapeutic community model. This is followed by several months of support for Guests as they transition out of Eli's Place into housing, education and work.

The program is built on the Gould Farm model, a 113-year-old residential therapeutic community on a working farm in rural Massachusetts with a strong evidence base and documented long-term outcomes. Gould Farm was selected as the Eli's Place program reference following a global review of 33 comparable centres.

At Eli's Place, work is real, not simulated — the largest single block of time in a Guest's day, and purposefully therapeutic. It produces something that needs to get done and makes each Guest a functional contributor to community life. It is also continuously adapted to each Guest's circumstances and capability on a given day, with staff working alongside Guests and observations from the work setting feeding directly back into the clinical team.



Eli's Place is designed to feel like a home rather than a facility. The physical environment, the daily rhythms and the relationships between Guests and staff are all understood as mechanisms of the therapeutic model, not backdrop to it. Where program needs and operational or resource constraints come into tension, the resolution requires reasoned judgment grounded in the program's values and the needs of the Guest population.

Eli's Place was founded by David and Deborah Cooper following the death of their son Eli Nathan Cooper in 2010, after a long struggle with serious mental illness. In their grief, the Coopers committed to building what Eli himself said he needed — a place where people living with serious mental illness could find time, community and meaningful work, especially on the land in a natural setting, as the foundation for recovery. That commitment has driven the organization for over a decade. It is the reason Eli's Place exists and the reason it matters.

Eli's Place is governed by a skilled and experienced board of directors with deep expertise across mental health, clinical practice, finance, law and community leadership — and grounded in the lived experience of serious mental illness and loss that gave the organization its founding purpose. The board has been the driving force behind the organization since its founding and remains actively engaged in its development.

Location

Eli's Place will operate from Loyola House on the grounds of the Ignatius Jesuit Centre (IJC), a 600-acre working farm and conservation property in Guelph/Eramosa Township, just north of the City of Guelph, Ontario. The IJC is a longstanding charitable organization with deep roots in land stewardship, conservation and community agriculture. Eli's Place is a non-religious program — the relationship with the IJC is an operational one, not a religious affiliation.



Under formal agreements with Eli's Place, the IJC provides the residential facility and coordinates access to the farm and conservation lands on which the outdoor work program is delivered. The IJC brings over three decades of experience in regenerative agriculture, agroecological training and ecological land management, and its Farm and Conservation team works directly alongside Eli's Place staff and Guests in facilitating the land-based work program.

The property includes working farm fields, market gardens, an orchard, old-growth forest, conservation lands, wetlands and maintained trails. Guests participate across a range of work streams drawn from the IJC's decades of land-based programming — from crop planting and seasonal harvesting through to ecological restoration, orchard care and trail construction. The work itself is the vehicle through which Guests develop strengths, form working relationships, build resilience and recover a sense of purpose and worth — the real-life skills and confidence needed to move toward greater independence.

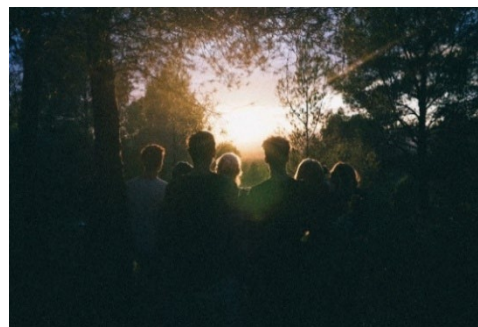
Guelph is a mid-sized city with a strong and growing health and social services sector, a well-established community mental health presence and deep institutional connections through the University of Guelph. Consistently ranked among the safest cities in Ontario, it offers over 1,000 hectares of parkland and trails, a vibrant arts community and a strong civic culture. It also offers a more affordable cost of living than Ontario's larger urban centres. Guelph is widely considered one of the best places to live in Canada.

Eli's Place is also within commuting distance of Kitchener-Waterloo, Cambridge, Fergus and Milton, and approximately 90 minutes from Toronto.



Role

The Work Team Lead supervises and supports Guest participation in the work program, ensuring a safe and productive work environment. The role reports to the Work Teams Manager, and is accountable to the clinical team for implementing Guest therapeutic goals and care plans within the work program. The Work Team Lead collaborates regularly with the IJC farm team in work planning and coordination.



The work itself is the vehicle through which Guests develop strengths, form working relationships and recover a sense of purpose and worth. The Work Team Lead maintains a sustained presence alongside Guests through side-by-side work, grounding each Guest in tasks appropriate to their capability on a given day and calibrating work difficulty in response to their presenting needs. The role requires noticing changes in a Guest's presentation or wellbeing as they arise in the work setting and responding supportively, and reporting observations back to the clinical team to inform treatment planning and review.



Like every founding role, this position carries a program-building mandate that distinguishes it from a steady-state work program post. In the pre-launch and early operating phases, the Work Team Lead helps establish the safety protocols, work calibration practices and documentation standards that will define the work program at Eli's Place.

At peak, Eli's Place serves up to 30 Guests in residence at any given time, with approximately 40 additional Guests supported through the transition phase.

Key Accountabilities

Guest Supervision and Safety

- Supervise and support Guest participation in the work program, ensuring a safe and productive work environment
- Maintain awareness of Guest whereabouts and wellbeing during work program hours
- Notice changes in a Guest's presentation or wellbeing during work and respond supportively, involving the clinical team as needed

Therapeutic Work

- Maintain sustained presence alongside Guests through side-by-side work
- Build consistent, boundaried and supportive relationships with Guests
- Ground Guests in tasks appropriate to their capability on a given day
- Calibrate work difficulty in response to each Guest's presenting needs
- Actively participate as a member of the therapeutic community

Clinical Alignment

- Implement each Guest's therapeutic goals and care plan within the work program, in accountability to the clinical team
- Observe and document Guest behaviour, engagement and progress in the work setting
- Report observations back to the clinical team to inform treatment planning and review

Ideal Candidate

Education and Experience

- Degree or diploma in social work, psychology, education or a related human services field, or equivalent experience working with adults living with serious mental illness
- Experience in a community-based, recovery-oriented or residential setting is preferred
- Interest in or aptitude for hands-on, practical work, indoors and outdoors, is an asset

Relational Skill and Judgment

- Warm, consistent and boundaried approach to relationships with Guests
- Ability to calibrate expectations and tasks to individual Guest capacity
- Emotional steadiness in a complex care environment
- Clear and timely communication with the clinical team and IJC farm team

Alignment with the Model

- Genuine openness to or familiarity with the therapeutic community model and recovery-oriented, non-institutional approaches to care
- Comfort working as one member of a small, closely connected founding team
- Innovative and adaptable, with an interest in contributing to a new, first-of-its-kind program model

Conditions of the Role

The role is full-time and on site. The Work Team Lead participates as a full member of the daily life of the Eli's Place community, working alongside Guests across a broad range of practical work.

The working schedule is determined by the work program and will include hours outside the regular workday. The role requires willingness and ability to engage in a broad range of work projects, always working side by side with Guests in direct support of their participation.

Compensation

The salary range for the Work Team Lead is \$58,000–\$70,000, commensurate with experience and qualifications. Eli's Place offers a competitive health and wellness benefits package. The Work Team Lead will receive three weeks of vacation annually. Eli's Place is committed to the ongoing professional development of its staff. Professional development is supported through a dedicated organizational fund.

Compensation at Eli's Place reflects both the financial and non-financial value of the work. This is a small founding team building something that has never existed in Canada, on a 600-acre working farm where the daily environment is unlike anything an institutional or urban setting can offer. For the right person, that context is as much a part of the offer as the salary

How to Apply

Eli's Place is committed to equity, diversity and inclusion. We encourage applications from individuals of all backgrounds and identities and are committed to a fair and accessible hiring process.

To apply, please submit a résumé and a cover letter addressed to Dr. Chris Joseph, Executive Director. Your cover letter should speak to your relevant experience working alongside people living with serious mental illness, your comfort with hands-on work on the land and in the facilities that support it, and what draws you to Eli's Place specifically. The substance of the cover letter is an important part of the screening process.

Applications should be submitted by email to jobs@elisplace.org

This position will remain open until filled. Review of applications will begin **September 14, 2026** and we encourage early submission. Applications received by that date will receive first consideration, and the posting will stay open until a suitable candidate is identified.

Only candidates selected for an interview will be contacted. We thank all applicants for their interest in Eli's Place. In accordance with Canadian immigration requirements, priority will be given to Canadian citizens and permanent residents. The successful candidate should be available to commence employment prior to November 7, 2026.