



CRISIS & SUICIDE LINE

REQUIREMENTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES FOR VOLUNTEERS

What do volunteers for the Crisis and Suicide Line do?

Crisis and Suicide Line volunteers provide supportive crisis counseling on the telephone. Volunteers are trained to be active, non-judgmental listeners who allow the caller to express and sort through his or her thoughts and feelings in confidence. Although the volunteer may offer options and provide information during the problem solving stage of this process, the goal in most cases is to assist the caller in developing his or her own solutions. Examples of presenting problems include depression, feeling of loneliness, family conflicts and assistance with basic needs referrals.

Must I have any special training or experience in order to apply?

No. Although professional counselors and therapists do sometimes volunteer their time at the Crisis Center, most volunteers are not professional helpers. In fact, a strong distinction exists between the type of work done by volunteer counselors and that of professionals.

What are the requirements that I must meet before making an application?

You must be a high school graduate at least 18 years old with a genuine interest in helping others. You must not be currently receiving services provided by any Crisis Center program. Mental health consumers must be emotionally ready to assist others and be no less than a year past their own crisis experience.

What's involved in the screening process?

You will be asked to complete an oral and/or written exercise and be interviewed by professional staff member(s). The entire process takes about an hour. Some of the qualities screened for include emotional maturity, dependability, stability, absence of harsh or judgmental attitudes, and personal insight. Information on your application will be verified by a background check. All of the information you give us is held confidential.

What happens if I am selected to volunteer?

Once accepted, volunteers will receive approximately 30 hours of training which includes lecture sessions and practical experience obtained with volunteer trainers. Evaluation of your progress is ongoing throughout the entire training period. Volunteer trainees sit in on shifts with their trainers and participate in role plays to address problem situations which callers may present.

That sounds like a lot! Why such a demanding training program?

First, the Crisis Center takes our commitment to the consumers and callers we serve very seriously. We believe our callers deserve more than just good intentions. Secondly, experience has shown us that well-trained volunteer counselors feel more confident, comfortable and competent with their work.

What's expected of me once I finish training?

Because the Crisis Center makes a considerable investment in training our volunteers, a minimum commitment of one year's service from the date of graduation is asked from each volunteer in return. Crisis and Suicide Line volunteers are asked to work a shift in the phone room every other week. Shifts are scheduled to meet individual needs and preferences. Shifts are available from 7:30am until 11:30pm seven days a week. Shifts typically last four to six hours (7:30am-12pm, 12pm-4pm, 2pm-6pm, or 6pm-11:30pm). Volunteers are expected to hold all information about calls in the strictest confidence.