



UTALK

REQUIREMENTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES FOR VOLUNTEERS

What do volunteers for UTalk do?

For Kids - volunteers provide supportive counseling, reassurance and referrals to children who have problems. These problems may vary from the less serious situational-type problems like arguments with friends, being home alone, etc., to the more serious issues such as depression, child abuse, and suicidal feelings.

For Teens - volunteers provide supportive counseling, reassurance and referrals to teenagers. Examples of calls may include relationship conflicts, loneliness and issues of sexuality to the more serious issues of suicide, drugs and alcohol use, and abusive family situations.

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 have a genuine interest in helping others and be at least 16 years old and a high school Junior with a minimum 2.5 grade point average. 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 a professional staff member. The entire process takes about an hour. Some of the qualities screened for include dependability, emotional maturity, 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 25 hours of training, which includes lecture sessions and practical experience such as role plays to address problem situations which callers may present. Evaluation of your progress is ongoing throughout the entire training period.

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 volunteers, a minimum commitment of one year's service from the date of graduation is asked from each volunteer in return. Volunteers are asked to work a shift in the phone room every other week. Shifts are available 3pm-6:30pm or 6:30pm-10pm seven days a week. Shifts are scheduled to meet individual needs and preferences. Volunteers are expected to hold all information about calls in the strictest confidence.