



Becoming a Crisis Support Volunteer Prospective Volunteer Information Package

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Sexual Assault Centre (Hamilton & Area)

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Dear Prospective Volunteer,

Thank you for your interest in volunteering with the Crisis Support Program of SACHA, the Sexual Assault Centre (Hamilton & Area).

The next training program will run on Tuesday evenings, 6-9pm, from March 5th to June 25th. Screening will be held in January and until February 22.

This information package will give you more details about becoming a volunteer on SACHA'S 24-Hour Support Line. Please consider it carefully before making your decision and do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions, or wish to apply for the program. We will arrange a time to meet for screening.

Please bring the completed Application Form with you to your screening interview.

If you decide that this is not the volunteer position for you and are comfortable in sharing your reasons with us, please let us know. This information is helpful for us when we make changes to our program and developing new ideas. We may also be able to offer you other, more suitable volunteer opportunities with SACHA. We look forward to hearing from you.

I look forward to hearing from you!

Miriam Sager
Crisis Support Program Coordinator

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A Member of the Ontario Coalition of Rape Crisis Centres
Funded by the Ministry of the Attorney General
A United Way Member Agency

The Sexual Assault Centre (Hamilton & Area)

Vision:

SACHA envisions a world free of violence and oppression.

Mission:

SACHA is a feminist, non-profit, community-based organization that provides supports to people who have experienced sexualized violence at any point in their lives. We work to end violence and oppression through education, advocacy, outreach, coalition building, community partnerships, and activism.

Values:

SACHA will challenge social and political structures and systems that contribute to the experience of violence, oppression, and exploitation of all people.

We believe that:

Definition & Roots of Sexualized Violence

- Sexualized violence is an act of power and control expressed in sexual means. Although committed by an individual, such sexualized violence is a result of gender and power dynamics and is structurally supported in our culture and institutions.
- **Sexualized violence is a gendered issue. This violence takes place within a social, political, cultural and economic, historical and still ongoing, context of male domination and the disadvantage and oppression of women and children. Both boys and girls are socialized to fit into this system and to perpetuate it, creating a model of toxic masculinity which harms people of all genders.**
- Therefore, SACHA works from intersectional, equitable, feminist, anti-racist and anti-oppressive frameworks. Working toward the elimination of sexualized violence means recognizing and addressing the layered ways multiple forms of violence are perpetuated in our society.
- A consent culture, based on equity, is essential to ending sexualized violence.
- It is essential that we recognize and honour the historical contribution to the anti-sexual violence movement made by women with intersecting identities; criticism that the feminist movement has excluded racialized, trans, Indigenous, lesbian, disAbled and other women is valid and these voices must be heard at SACHA.

Survivors' Rights

- Our efforts must be grounded and informed by survivors, who founded our organization.
- Supporting survivors of sexualized violence to heal requires us to acknowledge that people have multiple identities and experiences of oppression that shape the way they experience and respond to sexualized violence as individuals and communities.
- People respond to and resist sexualized violence in diverse ways, and it is a person's right to self-determine how to access safety when experiencing violence or oppression in their life.
- **Survivors of sexualized violence have the right to control their own bodies and their own path to healing.**
- Survivors are never responsible for violence perpetrated against them.
- Men's socialization can serve as barriers to male-identified survivors reaching out and receiving support; we are committed to making our services accessible to all genders.

SACHA Organizational Culture

- SACHA operates as a modified collective, using consensus and collaboration, to ensure all members of SACHA – volunteers, staff, and students – have their voices heard.
- **Self-care and wellness of those working and volunteering at SACHA are a political tool that sustain us in our work.**

**We
Believe
Survivors**

Why Become a Volunteer 24-Hour Support Line Worker?

It is no secret that becoming, and being, a volunteer crisis support worker require a lot of time, dedication, and emotional investment. People do this work for many reasons. Even though the demands are high, they volunteer because they know that the work is important. They feel satisfaction knowing they are making a difference. Many volunteers are committed to changing society in order to end gender-based violence. You will:

- help survivors of sexual violence and their support persons;
- learn new skills or improve the ones you already have;
- learn about the community;
- meet other talented, like-minded people and may make some close friends;
- gain valuable experience for school and work.

Please note that although SACHA values its volunteers, it is a small organization and therefore the chances for employment with SACHA are slim.

You must figure out why *you* want to volunteer with SACHA. What are your goals? Is volunteering with the Crisis Support Program the best way to achieve them?

Expectations of a Volunteer Crisis Support Worker

1. One-year commitment to being a volunteer in the program.
2. We ask volunteers to cover two 4-hour shifts, or eight hours, per week on the Support Line. Workers sign up for shifts according to their availability.
3. Workers will attend monthly meetings to share information, to get support and to participate in on-going training. Meetings are usually held at 6:00-8:00 pm.
4. Workers take calls from their homes through SACHA'S answering service.
5. When phoning a caller, workers will use call blocking to maintain confidentiality of their phone numbers. Workers are responsible for ensuring call block is available on their phones.
6. Workers will provide emotional support, information and advocacy to survivors of sexual violence. We support survivors of all gender identities, sixteen years of age and older, and to their allies.
7. If needed, workers will access an interpreter on the Line to assist the communication between the worker and the caller.
8. If asked to go on an accompaniment to the police or hospital during your shift, it will be your responsibility to go. Special circumstances that may prevent you from going on accompaniments must be discussed with the Coordinator in advance; if approved, you are expected to arrange for another worker to go in your place. Volunteers who do not have a vehicle can use the taxi service that SACHA works with, if they live within the municipal boundaries of Hamilton.

9. Workers may be asked by the coordinator or by fellow workers to cover extra shifts or to go on an accompaniment. You will decide, at that time, if you are able to do either of those things. It is not required that you be available at all times.
10. Workers will consult with other volunteers and staff about any difficult situations that they are unsure how to deal with or when they need immediate support.
11. Workers will follow reporting procedures with regards to any critical incident.
12. Workers will submit statistics on your work as a SACHA volunteer.
13. If a worker is unable to cover a shift they have signed up for, it is their responsibility to find a fellow worker to take the shift and to ensure that everyone is informed of the change according to Program procedures.
14. Workers may participate in various other tasks related to the operation of the Program.

Even though you are taking calls by yourself from home, you are not alone. Other volunteers and staff are available for your support. If you have concerns regarding the work, the Program Coordinator is available to meet with you. You will also be asked to provide feedback on the program.

During training, prospective crisis support volunteers will be given a volunteer manual that provides more information about policies and procedures.



Requirements for Being a Crisis Support Volunteer

Volunteer crisis support workers will:

1. Be a woman-identified or non-binary person (including persons who identify as genderqueer and/or gender non-conforming).
2. Be 18 years of age or older.
3. Be willing to get a current police check before completing training.
4. Have private access to a phone and the Internet.
5. Act within the spirit of SACHA's Vision/Mission Statements.
6. Adhere to SACHA's Policies and Procedures, including the Code of Ethics.
7. Maintain strict confidentiality as outlined in SACHA's Policies.

8. Demonstrate a commitment against gender-based violence.
9. Adhere to SACHA's pro-choice position. This means that if a caller is pregnant and wants to discuss available options, you will offer the options of keeping the baby, giving it up for adoption, or abortion.
10. Commit to the time requirements. Any leave of absence will be negotiated with the Program Coordinator. (For example, students who are unavailable during the summer can discuss this with the Coordinator. In order to ensure the Line is staffed at all times, a limited number of such students will be accepted.)
11. Demonstrate effective communication skills, an ability to provide emotional support and information, and a good working knowledge of the English language.
12. Demonstrate a willingness to learn how to advocate for survivors of sexual violence.
13. Although prospective volunteers will complete an initial screening interview, training is an ongoing screening process. The training team will address concerns as they come up.
14. Complete SACHA's Crisis Support Volunteer Training successfully and meet all requirements.

Training will include:

- an intersectional feminist analysis of sexual violence
- anti-racism/anti-oppression education
- crisis support skills development
- role playing in small groups and required practice over the phone
- dynamics and emotional impacts of adult & child sexual assault
- medical and legal processes
- working with suicidal callers
- reporting to a child protection agency
- roles and responsibilities of a volunteer crisis support worker
- policies and procedures

If You Are a Survivor of Violence

For workers who are survivors, the training process and staffing the 24-Hour Support Line can bring up old memories and many feelings. We ask, therefore, that survivors be at a place in their healing journey where they understand the impact the violence has had on them, and can cope with these memories and feelings.

Former SACHA service users may apply to volunteer after a twelve-month waiting period.

Diversity

As part of SACHA's work against racism and other oppressions, we strive to reflect the diversity of the communities we serve. Woman-identified/non-binary persons including

persons who identify as genderqueer and/or gender non-conforming, who are Indigenous, immigrant, refugee, lesbian, bi-sexual, 2-spirited, queer, racialized, with disAbilities, and/or who experience any other oppressions are encouraged to apply.

Our screening and selection process considers equity as a factor.

If you require any accommodation for the screening interview, please inform the Program Coordinator before scheduling and interview.

Process To Becoming a Crisis Support Volunteer

1. Read this information package carefully. If you require more information, call the Crisis Support Program Coordinator.
2. Call the Coordinator to schedule a screening interview. Currently, interviews take place in August for the fall session, and in January-February for the spring session.
3. Bring your completed Prospective Volunteer Application Form (see below) to your screening interview. If you cannot print it, we will provide you with one when you arrive for your interview.
4. The screening interview will last approximately 45 minutes. You will be interviewed by the Program Coordinator and one other staff member or a volunteer. Our screening and selection process considers equity as a factor. Answers will be emailed at least one week before training begins.
5. After the initial screening interview, training is an on-going screening process and the training team will address concerns as they come up.
6. You will be asked to show us a current police check before the end of training, as well as completing other needed paperwork.
7. You will be required to complete online tutorials in compliance with the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act.
8. Attend 13 of the 16 training sessions and catch-up sessions on any missed sessions.
9. Read the entire Training Manual and Volunteer manual, as well as any additional materials that will be provided.
10. You will be given a test call between the two last sessions of training. The test or "simulated call" is a role-play on the phone with you as the Crisis Support Worker. You will be evaluated and informed if:
 - a. you are ready to take calls; or
 - b. you need another test call; or
 - c. your skills are not suited to crisis support work on SACHA's 24-Hour Support Line.
11. Once you have met all requirements and pass the test call, you will be a Crisis Support Program volunteer!

STRICTLY PRIVATE AND CONFIDENTIAL
Crisis Support Program
Prospective Volunteer Application Form
Please bring the completed form with you to screening interview.

1. Personal information:

Name _____

Address _____ City _____

Province _____ Postal Code _____

Primary Phone _____ Other Phone _____

E-mail _____

2. I am interested in staffing --

- the 24-Hour telephone support line
- the chat/text support service only
- both services

3. Requirements for being considered for training:

In order to participate in training and be considered to become a SACHA Crisis Support Volunteer you must meet the following requirements:

1. Be 18 years of age or older
2. Be woman-identified/non-binary person including persons who identify as genderqueer and/or gender non-conforming
3. Commit to staffing the Support Line for eight hours per week (broken up into two 4-hour shifts) for a year after training
4. Have private access to a phone and the Internet
5. Be able to provide a vulnerable sector police screening (you will receive a letter to the police when in training so you can be reimbursed by SACHA; please do not go yet.)

I have read and understood the above-mentioned requirements.

Signature

Date

Please turn over

Please provide the names and phone numbers of two references, at least one of whom is not a friend. Family members and your therapist are not accepted as references. These should be people who have known you for at least 2 years (unless you are new to Canada) and who are able to provide information regarding your skills, abilities and suitability to work with survivors of sexual violence.

Reference 1

Name _____

Address _____

Tel. _____

Alt. Tel. _____

Email address _____

Relationship _____

Reference 2

Name _____

Address _____

Tel. _____

Alt. Tel. _____

Email address _____

Relationship _____

I authorize SACHA, Sexual Assault Centre (Hamilton & Area), to contact the above-named referees in connection with my application for the crisis support volunteer position. I authorize these referees to provide a reference in connection with my application for this position.

Signature

Date