



Becoming a Crisis Support Volunteer Prospective Volunteer Information Package

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Sexual Assault Centre (Hamilton & Area)

sacha.ca

Business: 905-525-4573

24-Hour Support Line: 905-525-4162



January 2021

Dear Prospective 24-Hour Support Line 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 online on Tuesday evenings, 6-9pm, from March 16 to June 29, 2021. Screening will be held until March 4, 2021.

Please read and consider this information package about becoming a Crisis Support Program volunteer carefully before making your decision. If you have any additional questions you may reach out to me by email or by phone. To apply, please complete the application at the end of this packet and email it to me as soon as possible. We will then arrange a time to meet online for screening.

If you decide that this is not the volunteer position for you and are comfortable in sharing your reasons with us, please do so. We may be able to offer you other, more suitable volunteer opportunities with SACHA.

I look forward to hearing from you!

Miriam Sager
Crisis Support Program Coordinator
(905) 525-4573 ext. 222
Email: clvol@sacha.ca

**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-sexualized 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.**



Why Become a Volunteer 24-Hour Support Line Worker?

It is no secret that becoming, and being, a volunteer crisis support worker requires 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 sexualized 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. Volunteer in the program for at least one year after training.
2. Cover two 4-hour shifts, or eight hours, per week on the Support Line. Volunteers sign up for shifts according to their availability. 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.)
3. Attend monthly meetings to share information, get support and participate in on-going training. Meetings are usually held at 6:00-8:00 pm on different days.
4. Take calls from their homes through SACHA'S answering service.
5. Use call blocking to maintain confidentiality of their phone numbers when making support line calls.
6. Provide emotional support, information and advocacy to survivors of [sexualized violence](#). We support survivors of all gender identities, 16 years of age and older, and their allies.
7. Access an interpreter on the Line to assist the communication with the caller, if needed.
8. Go on accompaniments to the police or hospital, if requested during a shift. Special circumstances that may prevent a volunteer from doing so must be discussed with the Coordinator in advance; if approved, the volunteer is expected to arrange for another worker to go in their place. Volunteers can use the taxi service that SACHA works with, if they live within the municipal boundaries of Hamilton.
9. Volunteers may be asked by the coordinator or by fellow workers to cover extra shifts or to go on an accompaniment, and are free to decide if they will do so.
10. Consult with other volunteers and staff about any difficult situations that they are unsure how to deal with or when they need support. We have several channels of communication for this purpose.
11. Follow reporting procedures with regards to any critical incident.

12. Submit statistics on their work as a SACHA volunteer.
13. A volunteer who is unable to cover a shift they have signed up for, is responsible to find a fellow worker to take the shift and to ensure that everyone is informed of the change according to Program procedures.
14. In everything we do, we follow SACHA's policy and procedures, which are introduced to prospective crisis support volunteers during training.

Volunteers may participate in various other tasks related to the operation of the Program. Some, such as staffing the text/web chat service and membership in the Volunteer Consulting Committee, will be open to volunteers only after having accumulated a given amount of experience staffing the 24-Hour Support Line.

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 will be available to meet with you.



Requirements for Becoming a Crisis Support Volunteer:

1. Applicants must be **18** years of age or older.
2. Women and non-binary persons may apply (if you have a question about what that means, please contact us).
3. Planning to live in Hamilton for at least one year after the end of training.
4. Willingness to get a current police check before completing training.
5. Private access to a phone and the Internet.
6. Willingness to act within the spirit of SACHA's Vision/Mission Statements.
7. Adhering to SACHA's Policies and Procedures, including the Code of Ethics.
8. Maintaining strict confidentiality as outlined in SACHA's Policies.
9. Demonstrating a commitment against sexualized violence.
10. Adhering 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.
11. Commitment to the time requirements or training and of covering 8 hours a year for at least one year after training.
12. Demonstration of effective communication skills, an ability to provide emotional support and information, and a good working knowledge of the English language.
13. Demonstration of a willingness to learn how to advocate for survivors of sexualized violence.
14. 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.
15. Successful completion of SACHA's Crisis Support Volunteer Training and meeting all requirements.

Training will include:

- an intersectional feminist analysis of sexualized 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

We know feminism has its own history of excluding marginalized voices and we at SACHA work to build a stronger collective that truly represents our communities. As such, we would like to encourage women and non-binary persons who are Indigenous, Black, racialized, immigrant, refugee, two-spirit, trans, queer, working class, disAbled, or experiencing other forms of oppression to apply. We consider equity in our screening and selection process

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

**We
Believe
Survivors**

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. Arrange a screening interview with the Program Coordinator.
3. Please complete the Application Form (see below) and email it to the Program Coordinator at cvol@sacha.ca.
4. The screening interview will last approximately 30-45 minutes. You will be interviewed by the Program Coordinator and possibly one other staff person or a volunteer. Screening will be completed and

answers will be emailed at least one week before training begins.

5. Training is an on-going screening process. The training team will address concerns as they come up.
6. Complete paperwork and, by the end of training, present a police Vulnerable Sector Screening (do not apply for it yet as it will have to be new).
7. Complete the online Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) training.
8. Attend and actively participate in at least 13 of the 16 training sessions, and catch-up sessions on any missed sessions.
9. Read the Training and Volunteer manuals, 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!



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

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