



## **Becoming a Crisis Support Volunteer Information & Application Package**

### **Contents**

- The Sexual Assault Centre (Hamilton & Area) ..... 2
- Why Become a Volunteer Crisis Support Worker ..... 3
- Expectations of a Volunteer Crisis Support Worker ..... 4
- Requirements for Being a Volunteer Crisis Support Worker ..... 5
- If You Are a Survivor of Violence ..... 5
- Diversity ..... 6
- Process to Becoming a Volunteer Crisis Support Worker ..... 6

### ***Sexual Assault Centre (Hamilton & Area)***

[sacha.ca](http://sacha.ca)

Business: 905-525-4573

24-Hour Support Line: 905-525-4162

A Member of the Ontario Coalition of Rape Crisis Centres  
Funded by the Ministry of the of Children, Community and Social Services,  
City of Hamilton and the United Way



## **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?**

Becoming, and being, a volunteer crisis support worker requires a lot of time, dedication, and emotional investment. Still, people have many reasons for doing this work. 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 a good 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 8 hours, per week on the Support Line. Volunteers cover weekday evenings and nights (4pm to 8am), and weekends, 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. Block their phone ID to protect their confidentiality when making support line calls.
6. Provide emotional support and information 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 with communication, if needed.
8. Accompany survivors 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 for this purpose 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.
11. Report to child protection authorities or call for help in cases when the caller or someone else is in immediate danger, and follow reporting procedures with regards to any critical incident.
12. Submit statistics on their work as a SACHA volunteer.
13. Find a fellow worker to take a shift if you are unable to cover a shift you signed up for, and ensure that everyone is informed of the change according to Program Procedures.
14. In everything we do, we follow SACHA's Policy and Procedures, including our Code of Ethics and Code of Conduct, which are introduced during training.

Volunteers may participate in various other tasks related to the operation of the Program. Some, such as 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. Only women and non-binary persons may apply (See **Diversity** below).
3. Planning to live in Hamilton for at least one year after the end of training.
4. Willingness to provide a new police check before completing training.
5. Private and dependable 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 of training, and of staffing the phone for 8 hours a week for 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.

### **Diversity**

As part of SACHA's work against racism and other oppressions, we strive to reflect the diversity of the communities we serve. We want to be transparent about our ongoing internal conversations to address non-binary inclusion at SACHA as we work to make SACHA a safer place for all. Women and non-binary persons, who are Indigenous, immigrant, refugee, lesbian, bi-sexual, 2 Spirit, queer, racialized, with disabilities, and/or who experience any other oppressions are encouraged to apply.

### **Training Will Include:**

- an intersectional feminist analysis of sexualized violence
- anti-racism/anti-oppression education
- crisis support skills development including role playing in small groups and over the phone
- dynamics and emotional impacts of adult & child sexual assault
- medical and legal information
- working with suicidal callers and 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 survivors, the training process and staffing the 24-Hour Support Line can bring up old memories and feelings. We therefore ask 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.

## **Process to Becoming a Crisis Support Volunteer**

1. Read this information packet at <https://sacha.ca/volunteer> carefully. If you require more information, contact the Crisis Support Program Coordinator, [rachel@sacha.ca](mailto:rachel@sacha.ca).
2. Download and complete the application form which can be accessed at <https://sacha.ca/volunteer>, and email it to the Coordinator at [rachel@sacha.ca](mailto:rachel@sacha.ca). When the screening cycle begins we will share a link for you to schedule a time for an online screening interview.
3. The screening interview will last approximately 45 minutes. Answers will be emailed at least one week before training begins.
4. Complete required reading and paperwork by the end of training, including a police Vulnerable Sector Screening (do not apply for it before the third week of training).
5. Complete the online Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) training.
6. Attend and actively participate in at least 13 of the 16 training sessions, and catch-up sessions on any that you miss.
7. Participate in role-play practice in small groups and in required individual phone calls.
8. Read the Training and Volunteer manuals, as well as any additional materials that will be provided.
9. 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.
 We will support you through this process.

**We look forward to hearing from you!**

