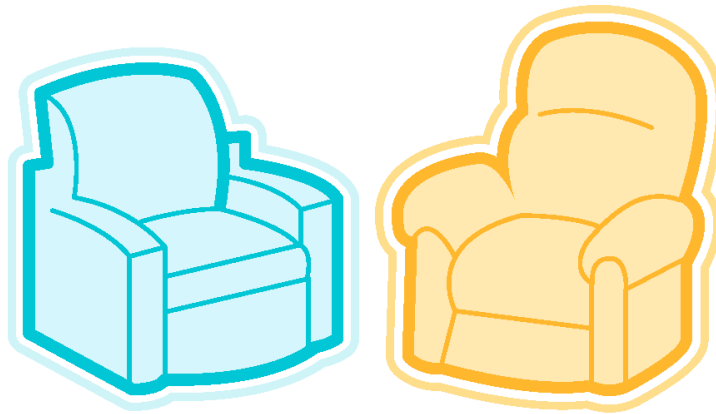


## Volunteering With The PSC



# PEER SUPPORT CENTRE

*We listen. Seriously.*

**Information Booklet  
2011**



## **Introduction**

### **What is the Peer Support Centre?**

The PSC is a Students' Union service that offers free and confidential support to individuals in the university community. We provide a safe and non-judgmental environment where anyone can talk – no issue is too big or too small! Our volunteers offer assistance over the phone (492-HELP) and in-person (030-N SUB). We can also provide referrals to appropriate campus and community resources.

At the PSC we educate and raise awareness about important but difficult topics – topics such as loss, stress, suicide, abuse, and addictions. We also maintain a Resource Library stocked with pamphlets and information packages about different services and issues.

The PSC offers an amazing volunteer opportunity where you can truly make a difference in others' lives. Trainees first complete an extensive 64-hour training program that covers crisis intervention, suicide prevention, and much more before officially becoming volunteers.

## **Volunteering**

### **What do PSC volunteers do?**

Our volunteers contribute to the service in many ways, including:

- Providing support over the phone at the Peer Support Centre
- Talking one-on-one with drop-in clients at the PSC
- Setting up booths in SUB, Lister, and other areas around campus\*
- Giving educational presentations about stress to student groups\*
- Organizing events to increase awareness of important issues\*
- Organizing social events for fellow volunteers\*
- Additional training for leadership roles within the PSC\*

*\* indicates optional activities*

### **What is the time commitment?**

Qualified applicants are first required to take a 64-hour training course. It is mandatory to attend every training session. A complete list of mandatory training dates is found in the application form.

After the successful completion of training, volunteers contribute 3 hours a week to the PSC. Most of this time is spent in the shift room seeing clients, while the remainder is spent helping out your team (either Outreach or Social Planning). We ask all volunteers to sign a 1-year contract, but many volunteers continue on past their initial commitment.

### **What qualities do we look for in volunteers?**

We are looking for individuals who are:

- Caring and non-judgmental about all issues
- Mature and responsible
- Patient and empowering
- Dedicated and able to fulfill the time commitment
- Self-aware and able to handle stress in a healthy manner
- Ready to make a difference!

## **Benefits of Volunteering**

### **Be There to Make a Difference**

Volunteering at the PSC gives you the opportunity to help those in need. Whether you are talking to a client who is experiencing exam stress or listening to a suicidal caller, you are making a difference in that person's life. Sometimes when people are in distress, they just need someone to be there and *listen* to them - you can be that someone.

### **Decide What To Do With Your Life**

Many of our volunteers initially join the PSC because they are interested in pursuing careers in psychology or sociology. Volunteering for the PSC is a realistic way of 'testing the water' and gaining practical experience that can help you determine if you are truly on your preferred career path. Some of our alumni have indeed decided on psych/soc related work, but other volunteers have realized that their career interests lay elsewhere (ex. medicine, law) while still continuing to contribute to the PSC. Regardless of your career path, the skills you learn through volunteering (such as supportive listening, empowering others, communicating effectively, being a leader, and many more) will help you in your professional and personal life.

## **Gain an Edge**

Volunteering for the PSC can help you have an edge when it comes to applying for grad schools or jobs, as this type of experience strengthens any resume. The Admin Team is overjoyed to be able to write letters of reference for our volunteers. Furthermore, if you are interested in applying for grad school for counseling psychology, *you may be required* to have this kind of practical experience. For example, at the University of Alberta, "Students applying for the Master's Program in Counselling Psychology must: have acquired practical experience in the application of psychology (e.g., crisis line volunteer, youth worker)." (<http://www.uofaweb.ualberta.ca/edpsychology/>). Members of the

## **Get to Know Yourself**

Volunteering for the PSC is challenging, but ultimately our volunteers come to discover more about themselves and what they are capable of. Through helping others in their most difficult times, our volunteers grow in confidence, strength, and maturity.

## **More Benefits of Volunteering**

### **Help the PSC Grow**

Our service is only as strong as our team members. By volunteering with the PSC and contributing your energy and ideas, you can help our service continue to improve, and help us shape our future success.

### **Lead the Way**

There are many opportunities for advancement at the PSC. For instance, motivated volunteers can become part of the Leadership Team and facilitate the Outreach, Social Planning and Training Teams. Qualified volunteers can also apply for Role-Play Facilitator training and have an important role in maintaining the quality of the service. These various leadership opportunities help volunteers further develop their interpersonal and organizational skills, and may lead to staff positions within the PSC.

### **Learn For Free**

At no cost to the individual, trainees complete an extensive training course where they learn and practice the skills necessary for supportive

listening, crisis intervention, suicide prevention, info and referral, and much more. As well, highly skilled trainers teach our volunteers about important issues like child abuse, domestic violence, and mental illness.

### **Meet Cool People**

From the time you begin training to the completion of your commitment, you will meet many interesting and cool people (100% guaranteed!). Training classes usually include about 25 volunteers, and are great opportunities to get to know other people. At the PSC, we work together to maintain a supportive and friendly community, and we even have our own Volunteer Room where all our volunteers can hang out. We have a fantastic mix of people (not just psych or soc majors, either), and we are very welcoming of new volunteers.

### **Pay Less for Your Lunch**

Have we mentioned that volunteers receive 10% discounts at L'Express, Cram Dunk, RATT, Dewey's and Juicy? Stay tuned for more deals to come!

## **Volunteer Testimonials**

"Volunteering at the Peer Support Centre has allowed me to understand more of who I am, and how I relate to others. It's a fantastic experience!"

"I find I communicate more effectively because of my experience with the Peer Support Centre."

"The people I volunteer with at the Peer Support Centre have become my very good friends!"

"This experience has given life to the information from my classes."

"The Peer Support Centre has provided me with an opportunity to enhance my leadership skills."

## **Volunteer Achievements**

At the PSC we are very proud and supportive of our volunteers. Our alumni have enjoyed great success academically and professionally. Some of our volunteers from the 2010-2011 school year have gone on to:

- Grad school for Counseling Psychology
- Grad school for Genetic Counseling
- Med school
- Staff positions with The Peer Support Centre
- Full time employment with other community agencies

## **Application process**

### **How do I apply?**

- 1) Visit [www.su.ualberta.ca/psc](http://www.su.ualberta.ca/psc) and read the 'Peer Support Centre,' section and 'Volunteer Information' on the left sidebar menu section of the website to find out more about the PSC.
- 2) Print off the Volunteer Application Form and fill it out. Please note that you will need to submit the names and phone numbers of two academic, employment, or volunteer related references. On the back of the application form, you will find a list of training dates. Please ensure that you can attend all dates.
- 3) Bring the completed application to any InfoLink booth in SUB. Be sure to submit your application before the deadline (September 16, 2011)– the sooner the better as there are only a limited number of spots for each training session! Training is offered once a year in September.

### **How are volunteers selected?**

- 1) After you submit your application, a member of the Admin team will contact you to schedule an interview, providing that you qualify and that there are still spots available.
- 2) In the interview, you will be asked about some of your personal experiences and opinions. The purpose of the interview is to make sure that your values match with those of the Centre. This interview typically lasts between 1-1.5 hours. For this interview you would need to bring two pieces of government-issued ID for a Criminal Record Check.
- 3) Next, a staff member will get in touch with your references.

- 4) If you qualify, you would then be invited to attend training and would be given the address for the exact location where the training will take place (the training takes place on-Campus). There is no cost for training. However, due to our limited budget, we do not provide meals.
- 5) Upon successful accomplishment of training, you will become a PSC volunteer.
- 6)  
*Please note that we are very selective of our volunteers to ensure that we are providing the best possible service for our clients.*

## Contact Information

If you have any questions about the information in this booklet, please phone 492-4268 or email [psc@su.ualberta.ca](mailto:psc@su.ualberta.ca).



The banner features a background of a repeating pattern of teal and orange squares, each containing a white speech bubble icon. Three large speech bubbles are overlaid on this pattern. The first bubble on the left contains the text "no issue is too big...". The second bubble in the middle contains the text "...to talk about with our student volunteers". The third bubble on the right contains an icon of two armchairs (one teal, one orange) above the text "PEER SUPPORT CENTRE" and the tagline "We listen. Seriously." Below the speech bubbles, a teal banner contains the text "CONFIDENTIAL • FREE • SAFE • CONFIDENTIAL • FREE • SAFE • CONFIDENTIAL • FREE • SAFE • CONFIDENTIAL". At the bottom, there are three sections: the left section says "Call our HELP LINE at 780-492-4357" and "Visit us at [www.su.ualberta.ca/psc](http://www.su.ualberta.ca/psc)"; the middle section says "Drop in at O-30N Lower Level SUB"; and the right section features the "STUDENTS UNION" logo.

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...to talk about with our student volunteers

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STUDENTS UNION

## Other Volunteer Opportunities

If you are not interested in applying at the Peer Support Centre at this time but would still like to volunteer on campus, you may want to check out the opportunities listed at [www.su.ualberta.ca/volunteer](http://www.su.ualberta.ca/volunteer).

*Thank you for reading and we look forward to meeting you soon!*