

Transitioning Volunteers into Trainers

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The Student Counseling HelpLine began operation in January of 1995. In recent years we have developed some new incentives to keep our volunteers invested in the program. One of our new incentives focuses on using volunteers during the training process. Initial training for the HelpLine consists of 6 full days of training including active listening skills, depression, suicide, sexual assault, diversity issues, and relationships issues, in addition to many other content sessions. Role play training is also done each day of the training week.

We have found that by donating time and expertise to the training process, our volunteers enhance role play exercises and aid staff in assessing the strengths and weaknesses of potential volunteers. In an effort to continually improve the quality, professionalism, and consistency of our training process, we developed training guidelines that have been established for our HelpLine trainers. Volunteers can serve in several different capacities which include Lead Trainer, Trainer, or Observer.

Seasoned volunteer staff are encouraged to help with training and are also encouraged to attend content sessions during the training week. When seasoned volunteers attend training sessions and/or provide a session, they continue to hone their skills and serve as good role models for trainees. This reiterates to our trainees how important training is and it also provides an excellent refresher for seasoned volunteers after summer vacation, semesters abroad, a dry spell of no calls, etc.

This conference session will discuss our training guidelines and show you how volunteer staff members can serve as excellent trainers. Participants of this session will be provided with a copy of our training schedule and training guidelines.

The Student Counseling HelpLine is sponsored and supervised by the Student Counseling Service at Texas A&M University. The HelpLine provides crisis intervention, support, information, and referrals for a campus of approximately 46,000 students and those concerned about these students. It is staffed by a dedicated and diverse group of undergraduate, graduate, and former students of Texas A&M University.