



University Students' Council of the University of Western Ontario
Position Description
PEER SUPPORT CENTER VOLUNTEER

EFFECTIVE: March 19, 2015

AUTHORITY: Executive Director, PSC **RATIFIED BY:** Executive Council

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1.00 POSITION TITLE: PEER SUPPORT CENTRE VOLUNTEER

2.00 POSITION OVERVIEW:

- (1) Provide students with non-professional support that is rooted in the shared experience as Western University undergraduate students. The Volunteer will be accessible, welcoming, accommodating to their peers, and provide a safe space.

3.00 PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITIES:

- (1) *Listen:* Whether they are sharing personal experiences, questions about resources on campus, concerns about their circumstances, or success stories, the PSC is a space in which students can meet with a student peer and share.
 - i. The peer volunteer will listen, without judgement, to the shared stories of the student visitor, providing therapeutic opportunities to vent followed by a more formal referral to professional supports.
- (2) *Affirm:* the PSC is a space in which student visitors can have their experiences, questions, concerns, and/or stories validated by a peer.
 - i. The peer volunteer will affirm the student visitor's liberty to experience emotions fluidly, and will work to ensure that the student visitor knows that every experience is valid.

Refer: the PSC will be a space in which peer volunteers have the knowledge and skill set to, if necessary, suggest a professional service on campus.

 - ii. After training, the peer volunteer will have extensive knowledge of the myriad services available to students at Western University, and will be able to refer student visitors to the resource on campus that best fits their needs.
- (3) Work within the Peer Support Centre during the hours designated by the Peer Support centre coordinator at the start of each semester.
- (4) Work in conjunction with USC support services on campus to provide the campus greater outreach.
- (5) Attend all mandatory training sessions.



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(6) Adhere to USC bylaws, policies, and procedures.

4.00 QUALIFICATIONS:

4.01 Qualified candidates for this position must be an undergraduate student of Western University and will have aptitudes in the following areas:

- (1) **Interpersonal Communication:** Given the need to work concurrently with a number of project stakeholders, a Peer Support Centre Volunteer requires strong interpersonal communication skills. They must also be able to provide constructive feedback through written and oral mediums.
- (2) **High degree of empathy:** Given the sensitive nature of the role and the intimate nature of the personal disclosures that may occur, a Peer Support Centre Volunteer should be able to understand and relate to the lived experiences of others.
- (3) **Adaptability:** a Peer Support Centre Volunteer should be able to think quickly on their feet and adapt recommendations based on information received during meetings with Centre visitors.
- (4) **Sensitivity:** a Peer Support Centre volunteer requires the ability to apply the utmost attention to confidentiality.
- (5) **Positivity:** a Peer Support Centre volunteer requires unmitigated positivity in order to effectively listen, affirm, and refer.
- (6) **Creativity:** A volunteer should always offer an avenue to a potential solution, never losing hope that there is opportunity for situational improvement.

5.00 TIME COMMITMENT:

5.01 Expected time commitment for the position will vary over the term:

- (1) Average time commitment: 2-5 hours per week, plus one 1-hour group supervision session per month
- (2) Time commitment for training sessions:
 - i. August 24th to 28th: 21 hours total
 - ii. September: SafeTalk (4 hours)
 - iii. Periodic training "refreshers," once per term (2 hours)
- (3) The Peer Support Centre will open for regular operations on Tuesday, September 6th, 2016.



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6.00 TRAINING/SUPPORT:

6.01 Peer Support Centre Volunteer training will include but is not limited to:

- (1) SafeTalk training (or equivalent) -- to handle disclosures
- (2) Sensitivity training -- to be aware of lived experiences, triggers, etc. when dealing with students
- (3) Ethics, confidentiality and accountability training -- to underscore the sensitivity of the subject matter and reinforce the important job peer support volunteers do
- (4) Operational training (e-systems, shift schedule, centre opening and closing)
- (5) Self-care and self-awareness workshops -- recognizing the difficult nature of being a peer support volunteer and encouraging self-care
- (6) Positive space training -- to ensure that the spirit of the unit's mission statement is being upheld through the behaviour of volunteers
- (7) Scenario and role-playing workshops -- will yield opportunities to apply knowledge gained in training to practical scenarios

7.00 LEARNING OUTCOMES:

- (1) Volunteers will learn to operate in a sensitive, potentially high-intensity setting.
- (2) Volunteers will become familiar with the nuances of human interaction, and experience working directly with students seeking assistance, all within a safe, comfortable, and controlled environment.
- (3) Upon program completion, a volunteer will know how to listen to student visitors, affirm the experiences of those visitors, and refer them to an appropriate campus or community resource.
- (4) The volunteer will also learn boundaries between them and the student peers that come into the centre as well as how and when to maintain confidentiality of the peer.
- (5) The volunteer will develop:
 - i. an understanding of the role of a peer support volunteer
 - ii. awareness of appropriate boundaries with peers who access the service
 - iii. an understanding of confidentiality and how it applies to the role



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- iv. effective use of non-verbal and verbal communication skills (including empathic listening skills)
- v. Understanding how a crisis can present, important resources and reporting safety concerns.

8.00 COMMUNITY IMPACT:

- (1) If successful, the Peer Support Centre Volunteer will have a direct and tangible impact on community members, thus impacting the community as a whole.
- (2) Through supporting students in their experiences and learning about the different aspects and elements of wellness, volunteers will play a meaningful and substantive role in fostering a culture that aspires to support peers.
- (3) The Volunteer will work to provide an opportunity to positively affect the Western University student community.

9.00 EVALUATION:

- (1) Volunteer performance will be monitored by the Peer Support Centre Coordinator. This monitoring may include private one-on-one interviews, group interviews, emails, the logging of hours, and the recording of completed tasks.
 - i. The Peer Support Centre Volunteer will participate actively with their supervisors in conducting formative performance assessments.
 - ii. Formative Assessment is an ongoing process of dialogue and informal feedback in which Supervisors and volunteers determine their level of satisfaction in the position and identify further learning needs for successful job completion.
 - iii. This review process may include private one-on-one interviews with supervisors, group interviews, and surveys, the feedback from which will be taken into consideration when strategically planning the program's future.

10.00 SUPERVISION:

- (1) Primary supervision: Peer Support Centre Supervisor.
 - i. Executive oversight: Student Programs Officer.
- (2) Secondary support: Elyse Dodd, Student Development Centre psychotherapist.
- (3) Tertiary support: Volunteer Resources Manager and Coordinator.