



April 26th, 2018

Dear Volunteer Applicant,

Thank you for your interest in becoming a volunteer counsellor at the Community Counselling Centre at Esquimalt Neighbourhood House (ENH). Becoming a volunteer counsellor at ENH involves two parts:

1. Successfully completing our 10-month volunteer counsellor training;
2. Committing to providing 200 hours of volunteer counselling upon successful completion of the training.

Please note that the volunteer counsellor training is part of an overall volunteer commitment, **not** a stand-alone program; ENH is training volunteers to provide much needed counselling services to the clients we serve. Our program is structured this way so that ENH can continue to offer free, accessible, quality counselling services to people in the Greater Victoria area. This is an extensive volunteer commitment that typically takes people several years to complete. We hope that the volunteering can be an ongoing and dynamic engagement with community rather than an obligatory contract to complete. Before applying, please seriously consider what you are looking for in a volunteer position and whether or not you are willing and able to make the commitment required for this position. It is indeed rewarding and challenging work that makes a real difference in the lives of the people we serve!

The following application allows us know more about you, your experiences, your skills, etc. It helps us to understand better how you might fit as a trainee, volunteer, and counsellor in our program. While we ask questions about things such as employment, we do not ask with one particular “ideal” answer in mind - we value many different assets. Indeed, we want to emphasize how important diversity is to ENH. People of all different backgrounds, experiences, and identities are heartily encouraged to apply.

Our volunteer counsellor training combines experiential learning and personal exploration with skills-based training and theory. This year we are in the midst of hiring a new trainer and so we do not want to get ahead of ourselves with the details of the training schedule. Generally speaking, the training will be held from 6:30pm to 9:30pm one evening a week (typically we have selected Wednesday evenings) from the second week of September until the middle of June. There will be additional weekend trainings on 3-4 weekends (i.e. full day Saturday and/or Sundays) to be finalized with the group.

The training also includes co-counselling (starting in December) and supervision components—**these are additional time-commitments that take place outside of weekly night group time.** *Please review the details of the time commitments in question 6 of the enclosed Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) section, as well as the entire FAQs document, before you prepare this application.

The deadline for volunteer applications has been extended to Friday June 29th, 2018. We will accept applications after the deadline if we have not filled all 16 spaces by the first selection round. Interviews will be held over several months—May, June and July. Our plan is to confirm all 16 spaces with successful applicants, as well as a training wait-list, by the end of July.

Thanks again for your interest in becoming a volunteer counsellor at ENH. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to call me at 250-360-0644 or email me at bmacevicius@enh.bc.ca.

Sincerely,

Brenda Macevicius, MSW, RSW
Counselling Services Coordinator

Community Counselling Centre,
Esquimalt Neighbourhood House Society (ENH)
2018-2019 Volunteer Counsellor Application Package

[All information you share will be kept confidential within the Selection/Co-facilitation Team.]

Please answer the following questions on the lines provided. Please also answer questions 1 through 20 (next page) on separate paper. A paragraph is adequate for most questions. Some will require only a few sentences. Please show us as yourself in these answers; we really want to begin to get to know you. In addition, you are welcome to attach a résumé but it is not required. Please return your application by **Friday June 29th, 2018** to Brenda Macevicius at Esquimalt Neighbourhood House, 511 Constance Avenue, Victoria, BC, V9A 6N5, or fax it to: 250-384-2078 or e-mail it to: bmacevicius@enh.bc.ca.

Name: _____ Age: _____
Phone: (home) _____ (work) _____ (cell) _____
Email: _____
Address: _____ Postal code: _____
Occupation : _____

a) How did you hear about the ENH volunteer counselling program?

b) Have you applied to our program before? If so, when?

c) Are you applying to other volunteer counselling programs? _____

d) Do you know anyone affiliated with ENH? _____

e) References: Please give the names and phone numbers of four references who can comment on your experience as a group member and or your suitability to become a volunteer counsellor (eg. group facilitator, teacher, or supervisor). Please include: two volunteer references, one employer reference and one character reference.

1) Name: _____ Phone: _____ (best time to call? _____)
Relationship to you: _____

2) Name: _____ Phone: _____ (best time to call? _____)
Relationship to you: _____

3) Name: _____ Phone: _____ (best time to call? _____)
Relationship to you: _____

4) Name: _____ Phone: _____ (best time to call? _____)
Relationship to you: _____

f) All Esquimalt Neighbourhood House staff and volunteers are required to get a current Criminal Record Check. Are you willing to do so? _____

Personal Background Information:

1. What personal life experiences have you had that you consider an asset for working as a volunteer counsellor?
2. What do you think about the value of life experiences in preparing us to support others?
3. List groups (i.e. support groups, self-awareness groups, therapy groups) you have participated in. Please comment on your experiences.
4. What do you imagine it would be like for you to participate in our group with 15 other participants? This group involves sharing and hearing personal information--how would that be for you?
5. What is your experience receiving counselling (individual, couple, or family counselling, psychological or psychiatric services, or counselling from clergy?) For what, when and for how long did you receive counselling?
6. What was your experience of counselling like?
7. Please outline your educational background and training that you consider an asset for this program.
8. Please outline your employment background that you consider an asset for this program.

Counsellor Training Information:

9. What are your main reasons for wanting to participate in this 10-month training?
10. The training component is a large commitment (see the enclosed FAQs). Regular attendance is essential. Please comment on your ability to keep this commitment.
11. To be good counsellors, we need a high level of self-awareness. What current personal issues in your life would you like to explore in the training group?

Volunteering as a Counsellor:

12. After the training, we ask volunteers to provide 200 hours of volunteer counselling. It usually takes 2 to 3 years to fulfill this commitment. Please tell us how this commitment would fit into your schedule and into your life in general.
13. Are there any significant life changes coming up for you (ex: starting school, re-locating, expecting a child, traveling, etc...)? If yes, when and for what time-span?
14. Have you had experience as a volunteer? If so, where and for how long? (Two references: Name/organization/number: _____)
15. Did you fully complete your volunteer commitment(s)? If not, why not?
16. What do you hope to gain from volunteering as a counsellor?
17. What personal strengths would you bring to your volunteer work?
18. What do you consider to be the areas of difficulty or challenge that you may have as a counsellor?
19. Experiences with clients can at times be unsettling. What kinds of supports and self-care would you access for yourself?
20. Additional comments and questions are welcomed.

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

1. What do you look for in a volunteer counsellor?

- Life experience
- Relevant volunteer experience, academic experience, and or work experience and training
- Related skills, knowledge
- Diversity within the training group
- Durability, compassion, discernment, courage
- Commitment to volunteerism
- Desire to contribute to community
- Good fit with a community-based approach
- Interest in being of service to others

2. What are some of the reasons people seek counselling?

Often for many reasons at a time, including:

- Abuse, trauma - mental illness
- addictions - poverty
- parenting - difficult transitions
- losses or stresses - relationship issues

3. What is our approach to counselling?

We have provided counselling to individuals and couples for over 20 years and have earned a stellar reputation for offering high quality, accessible, client-centred counselling, which has really made a difference in people's lives. Our approach is very much informed by a social justice, structural approach to counselling, which embraces diversity and anti-oppressive practice. We see people as whole beings—mind, body, heart and spirit—living within their families, communities and the larger society, all of which have very real effects on the self and on our health and wellness. Since we value accessible counselling and do not adhere to middle-class assumptions, our services are offered for free. We don't quiz people about their income, and we don't put people through hoops to access counselling. Some folks can afford to pay by their own choice and they do. We do not subscribe to an "us and them" approach to counselling where counsellors are the "us" folks and clients are the "them" folks. Volunteering with us as a counsellor has a lot to do with "accompanying" people, with lots of regard for people's strengths and knowing, and embracing the heart of what it really means to sit with people's suffering.

4. Who are we funded by?

We are grateful to: The United Way of Greater Victoria, the Victoria Foundation, BC Gaming, and most recently, Island Health. We also receive donations from individuals and organizations from many corners of our community, including the Provincial Employees Community Services Funds, Seaspan Victoria Shipyards, and the Township of Esquimalt. We are always seeking funding to ensure that our services are free and accessible to our community.

5. Considering counselling as a career?

We welcome applications from people who are interested in becoming professional counsellors. However, please be aware of the following:

- Our volunteer counselling program has two parts: the training and the volunteer counselling. Our primary purpose is to provide much-needed counselling services for people in our community.
- This volunteer experience looks great on a résumé for work or grad school. However, our program is not a small step on a ladder to a career. Please do not apply if you are on a tight time-line.
- The training component and counselling component have a great deal to offer and have assisted many people in making important decisions about how or whether they want to further pursue counselling as a career.
- *Many of the volunteer counsellors in our program do not want to be counsellors in their paid work.

6. What kind of a commitment are we looking for?

a) During the training:

Faithful attendance throughout the 10-month training as follows:

- Attendance at every 6:30-9:30pm evening training. As the training is "hands-on", regular attendance is crucial. If a volunteer misses more than two evening sessions, the facilitation team may require the volunteer to leave the training.
- Attendance at all of the weekend training days
- One-to-one supervision sessions with the facilitators outside of group time--regular supervisions are encouraged.
- 20 sessions of co-counselling from December of 2018 to May of 2019, including 10 sessions as a counsellor and 10 sessions as a client (some sessions involve a facilitator observing). This takes a minimum of 30 hours. Sessions occur outside of training group time, at times booked by "counsellor" and "client". They are (generally) done off-site, often in individuals' homes.
- Please note that while the training is not "group therapy", self-exploration, sharing of personal experiences in group, discussing real-life issues as a "client" in a practice session, and being open to feedback are all part of the training model. By sharing our knowledge and experiences with other trainees, we can learn, develop empathy and understanding, and become better counsellors.

b) During the volunteer counselling:

- A commitment of providing a minimum of 200 hours of counselling to people on our waitlist. (Volunteers can stay longer than 200 hours and often do!)
- Volunteers schedule sessions with clients in a way that works for them and their clients, i.e. in the evening, during the day, or on the weekends.
- Most volunteers see 1-3 clients a week, according to their availability and flexibility.
- Volunteers may take short breaks and return.
- Volunteers have a commitment to on-going learning, being open, being respectful, being receptive to feedback, and to resolving conflicts: hanging in there and working through challenging or awkward conversations as a responsible member of a volunteer community.
- Trainees start counselling either shortly before the training ends, or shortly thereafter.

7. What is our understanding of volunteering?

- Volunteering is about contributing, caring and community.
- Volunteers are valued and respected. "Unpaid" does NOT mean unskilled.

- This is not an “us and them” approach to services where counsellors are the “us” folks and clients are the “them” folks.
- Volunteering as a counsellor has a lot to do with “accompanying” people, with lots of regard for people’s strengths and knowing.

8. Reading, Exams, Evaluations and Feedback

- There are no exams and no marks are given. Participants are evaluated in ongoing, less formal ways by the facilitators and are given feedback on areas to work on.
- Readiness to see clients is assessed throughout the training.
- There is no heavy reading load required. We will distribute a reading list at the beginning of the training, which is mainly optional reading. There are also hand-outs that participants are expected to read throughout the training.
- There are occasional homework exercises given that do not require a big time commitment.
- As this is a highly experiential and integrative learning process, it requires active participation throughout the 10-month training.
- If a volunteer successfully graduates from the training, he or she will be invited to volunteer at our counselling centre.
- Participants’ input, feedback and evaluations are welcomed all along the way!

9. Biography of our contracted Group Facilitator: to be announced

10. What does Volunteer Counselling at ENH have to offer to its volunteers?

- an opportunity to work with amazing clients and positively impact people’s lives
- 10 months of intensive, high quality counselling training
- a steep and rich learning curve
- opportunities for self-exploration and increased self-awareness
- concrete counselling knowledge and skills
- connection with a community of other wonderful volunteer counsellors
- in-depth work experience, including counselling, crisis intervention, advocacy and referrals
- ongoing support, supervision and additional training opportunities

11. What have graduates said about ENH’s Counsellor Training?

“This program far exceeded my expectations. I have never experienced such a loving, nurturing learning environment where *all* of me was truly welcomed.”

“From the point of view of what I learned, I can feel the differences in my daily work in how I listen and respond to clients. ... Like the rest of the group, I wish I could continue meeting every week forever!”

“I expected the program to involve great learning, but I didn’t expect it to be life-changing. But it is. I cannot believe how much personal progress I have experienced and I am so grateful.”

“I feel very lucky to have been chosen for this group and I love the work that we do. The facilitators are all wonderful, amazing people.”

"I've completed a Masters Degree in Counselling Psychology but the things I learned during my counsellor training at ENH gave me central tools which I still use to this day in my work with clients."

12. What have clients said about ENH's counselling services?

"Excellent service. I liked the 'matching' of the counsellor with the client, based on client needs."

"I'm not sure that I was looking for changes or had any preconceived goals. I needed help with feeling completely overwhelmed—and I got that."

"My counsellor's support of me and my situation was caring, understanding, patient, skilled, compassionate and gentle."

"She [my counsellor] gave me her complete attention, was fully accepting of me, non-judgmental, compassionate, extremely intelligent and skilled, and never gave up on me. I would highly recommend ENH to others."