

Volunteer Crisis Counselor - Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Important Links

- [Training Dates Calendar](#)
- [Technical Requirements for Remote Volunteering](#)

General Questions

- **Is training remote or in-person?**
 - Volunteer training is **completely remote** and consists of live training sessions and mentorship through Zoom and self-paced online learning modules.
- **How often do you host volunteering training cohorts?**
 - Volunteer cohorts are hosted about 3-4 times a year, with each training lasting approximately 6 weeks.
- **Where are you located?**
 - Our office is located in Century City, CA (10277 W. Olympic Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90067).
- **What brings people to do this work?**
 - Many of our staff and volunteers are pursuing careers in the mental health field or considering a career change before applying to graduate school, while others are looking for something meaningful to do in their spare time. Some have been touched by suicide. Others just want to help people in crisis. Whatever the reason, we all have seen the incredibly rewarding nature of volunteering at SPC.

Interview Process

- **What is the overall interview process?**
 - Once your initial application has been reviewed and accepted, the interview process consists of 3 rounds: an online assessment, an on-demand interview, and a group interview.

- **What is the online assessment?**
 - The online assessment is a computer literacy assessment completed through the platform SkillCheck. The assessment takes approximately 30 minutes or less, and can be completed at any time of day on a desktop or laptop computer. We ask applicants to complete this technical assessment to ensure that they are set up for success on the crisis line.
- **What is the on-demand interview like?**
 - The first-round interview is an on-demand, recorded interview process through HireVue. First, you will watch a video of a team member asking a question. Then, you will reflect on the prompt, and finally, record your response to it. This will go on for a total of 11 questions, adding up to approximately a 25-minute long interview process. You can complete this on any computer, tablet, or mobile device that allows for audio and video recording.
- **What is the group interview like?**
 - Group interviews are held over Zoom with small groups of other prospective volunteers and members of our Training Team. The interview is approximately 1 hour long and consists of both a mini lesson and a group role-play exercise. The lesson goes over some basic crisis counseling concepts and the role-play asks you to apply the concepts from the lesson. You do not need to have any experience with crisis calls or role-playing in order to do this! This is also a good opportunity for you to see what the actual volunteer training is like and determine whether it is a good fit for you.
- **What is the Interest Form?**
 - We receive hundreds upon hundreds of applications throughout the year. In order to get a sense of which applicants are available for each given cohort, we may send out an Interest Form at the beginning of our application review period to all applicants. We review applications on a first-come-first-serve basis based on those who have filled out the form and indicated that they are available to volunteer during the identified training dates.
- **I have a couple of conflicts with the training schedule, can I still apply to volunteer?**
 - Our attendance policy allows for one excused absence during the 6-week volunteer training. With that, two or more absences during training will result in an automatic drop from the training cohort. An absence is defined as missing a meaningful portion of time in a single session, which is typically more than 30 minutes of class.

- **What do you look for in a volunteer?**
 - Successful volunteers demonstrate: empathy, curiosity, a willingness to talk about painful topics, dedication to erasing the stigma of suicide and/or mental health care, comfort with the learning process and application of feedback, acceptance of agency and legal policies, and a passion for doing this work. Lived experience (loss to suicide, suicide attempts, etc.) is definitely not a disqualifier for this volunteership, as long as it won't compromise someone's emotional well-being. There's no obligation to share, but you're welcome to discuss as much of your personal experience with your interviewer as you feel comfortable.
- **Do you let everyone through to be a volunteer?**
 - Unfortunately, no. We receive a large number of applicants year-round and this is a competitive volunteership with limited training space, so we are unable to accept everyone who applies.
- **How will I know if my application has been reviewed?**
 - If your application has been reviewed, you will receive an official email from someone on our team either inviting you to the next round (the online assessment) or informing you that you are not moving forward in the interview process at this time. If you **do not** receive either of these notices, you can assume that your application has not yet been reviewed. If that's the case, rest assured that your application will remain "live" and in our system for future cohorts.
- **If I'm not accepted as a volunteer crisis counselor, can I re-apply in the future?**
 - Yes - applicants are welcome to re-apply for the volunteer crisis counselor position. Please note that if you choose to do so, you'll need to use a different email than the one you used on your past application(s). We advise applicants to re-apply about 6 months after their initial application.
- **If I'm not accepted as a volunteer crisis counselor, are there other ways for me to get involved with SPC?**
 - Yes—if you are not selected as a volunteer crisis counselor, there are still many meaningful ways to get involved and support your community. Please explore our other opportunities [linked here](#).

For any questions or more information, please contact
spctraining@didihirsch.org.

Training and Apprenticeship

- **What needs to be completed before my first day of training?**
 - Please note that you will need to complete some asynchronous training modules prior to the first day of class. In total, this should take 2-4 hours to complete. If/when you are accepted, we send that information out one week before the start of our training program. Stay tuned!
- **What are the training expectations and community guidelines during remote learning?**
 - We kindly ask that you share your preferred first and last name (and pronouns, if comfortable) in your Zoom display window and Poll Everywhere activities.
 - Ensure your audio and video are working and are on throughout training as necessary.
 - Be on time to sessions and engage with our specialists, mentors, and peers via voice, chat, or Poll Everywhere during Lectures & Activities.
 - Ask questions if you are confused or are experiencing challenges/barriers. Our team is always available to support you!
 - Stay curious and practice humility – we all have different experiences and backgrounds, learn from your peers.
 - Tap into the Crisis Line resource folders for additional tools and documents to reference as needed.
 - Ensure you take your moments for care and grounding – we will be covering a lot of information!
- **How does the transition from training to apprenticeship work?**
 - Training is time-intensive in order to ensure that volunteers are ready when they start on the lines. Trainees are expected to complete the 6-week Crisis Counselor Training, where you learn to facilitate crisis calls with evidence-based approaches to suicide prevention and by facilitating role-plays with experienced trainers and volunteers. Trainees must also complete some additional assignments/online training outside of class time which are detailed in the class syllabus. This amounts to 35+ hours outside of the classroom experience.
 - During the first 3 months of volunteering (called “apprenticeship”), Trainees are closely monitored on their shifts and given substantial support. Help is always available, and at no time are Crisis Counselors left alone with a call. Trainees must successfully pass apprenticeship to remain on the lines. Please plan to be available for all apprenticeship shifts (first 12 shifts).

- **What does on-shift support look like?**
 - Shift Supervisors are present at all times to “listen in” (i.e. monitor calls) and provide debriefing/emotional support. Supervisors communicate with their volunteers during a call or chat/text in real time using instant messaging to provide feedback and guidance.
- **What shift can I have?**
 - Trainees who successfully pass all training requirements will be offered a weekly 4-hour shift taking either phone calls. Trainees fill out a shift preference form ranking their top 4 choices for shift times and are only placed on a shift that they have designated as an option. Please note that shift availability fluctuates based on the needs of the crisis line.
- **Can I change my shift?**
 - We handle shift change requests on a case-by-case basis. We request that you at least complete your apprenticeship (first 12 shifts) on the same weekly shift.
- **If I get sick or go on vacation, can I miss my shift?**
 - We ask that trainees refrain from missing shifts during their apprenticeship period (first 12 shifts) as much as possible. You are allotted a maximum of two absences during your apprenticeship period (3-4 months after completing training). Post-apprenticeship, there is a ‘pay it forward’ system in place to help you request substitution for your missed shifts. We’ll ask you ahead of time for any dates of planned absences to help us plan ahead!
- **Are there growth opportunities within SPC (like employment)?**
 - Once you have completed at least 6 months on the crisis line, you are welcome to apply for open employment positions at SPC.
- **Why do some people choose not to volunteer anymore during/after training?**
 - Volunteering with SPC is a big commitment, and sometimes people realize that it’s not the right time in their life to do this. That’s okay! We would always prefer to know earlier rather than later about any concerns that arise.