

YWCA PETERBOROUGH HALIBURTON JOB DESCRIPTION

POSITION TITLE:	Shelter Counsellor – Permanent Full-time, Part-time, Relief		
LOCATION:	Crossroads Shelter		
BARGAINING UNIT POSITION:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES	<input type="checkbox"/> NO	
# INCUMBENTS:	14-24		
# SUPERVISED:	Direct:	0	Indirect: 0
SUPERVISOR'S TITLE:	Shelter Supervisor		

PURPOSE OF POSITION:

To provide safe, secure, confidential and supportive crisis line and shelter services for women and their children who are living in, or are leaving, an abusive situation.

MAJOR RESPONSIBILITIES:

Preamble: Shelter counsellors, with the support and guidance of the Shelter Supervisor, are responsible for ensuring that the YWCA's MCSS and United Way funded and mandated outcomes are met. These outcomes are based upon the premise that Crossroads exists to keep women and their families safe from harm.

Specific mandated outcomes include:

- * Each woman who calls has the opportunity to find out her level of danger by way of an Initial Lethality Screen being done by the counsellor.
- * Each woman who calls has a safety plan for herself and her family created by a shelter counsellor.
- * Each woman who calls and asks to come into shelter is either admitted into shelter, or has an "Interview to Access" time scheduled, or is denied entry due to not meeting the mandate, in which case a "Denied Entry" form is filled out and filed.
- * Once resident at the shelter, each woman has a safety plan created appropriate to her changed circumstances while living at Crossroads.
- * Upon discharge from Crossroads, each woman has a safety plan created appropriate to her new living arrangements.

Specific responsibilities:

1. Understands and works within the parameters of Crossroads Procedures and YWCA Policies.
2. Uses brief solution-focused techniques in all facets of shelter counsellor work.
3. Conducts, usually over the telephone, Initial Lethality Screens, assesses for immediate danger, creates a safety plan and a plan to come into shelter. Provides telephone and one-to-one counselling and referral services for women and their children, using brief solution-focused therapy techniques. Upon intake, completes all required documentation, and ensures a safety plan is created to meet the woman's changed circumstances.
4. Meets with women, formally and informally, on each shift to offer support, a listening presence, or to provide information and referrals, as requested.
5. Meets formally with each woman each week to provide support as women work to achieve their goals.
6. The week before a planned discharge, meets formally with each woman to complete the "leaving interview".
7. Upon discharge, completes all required documentation and room cleaning.
8. Ensures that all documentation meets Crossroads Documentation Standards.
9. Responsible for the physical and social environment within the shelter, maintaining an atmosphere conducive to the well being of clients and staff.
10. Assists in training of students, volunteers and relief staff to ensure that work is carried out within YWCA Policies and Crossroads' procedures.
11. Performs a variety of related administrative tasks, such as statistical record-keeping, report preparation, & petty cash.
12. Attends staff meetings, training events and YWCA organizational meetings as required.
13. May accompany women to scheduled appointments with doctors, lawyers, and Peterborough Housing, and to court.
14. Co-ordinates, with Shelter Supervisor, Property Manager and other team members, day-to-day household cleaning & maintenance tasks.
15. Has a duty to understand and work within the Occupational Health & Safety Act and its regulations.
16. Other related duties as assigned by supervisor.

KNOWLEDGE:

Completed relevant post-secondary education (eg Social Service Worker diploma, Bachelor of Social Work, Addiction Counsellor Diploma) and at least 2 years relevant experience.

Demonstrates knowledge and ability to work with women and their families using brief solution-focused techniques.

Demonstrates knowledge, understanding, and ability to respond appropriately to women and their children as they deal with the short and long term effects of surviving trauma including: having lived in an abusive situation; having survived an abusive situation and dealing with the impact of leaving an abusive situation.

Incorporates knowledge and understanding of the impact of marginalization on women. Women may be marginalized by: living in a rural and/or isolated location; housing / homelessness; poverty; physical and mental health status; use of legal/illegal drugs &/or alcohol; racialization; immigration status; sexual orientation; gender identity; family status; physical & mental health status of their children; differing ability/disability; language; culture; religion; education; employment; source of income; socio-economic status; literacy and numeracy skills;, and so forth.

Demonstrates knowledge, commitment and ability to incorporate anti-oppression & anti-racist understanding into daily practice.

Knowledge of, and proven ability to use, Crisis Prevention & Intervention skills in order to diffuse and prevent crisis situations.

Demonstrates ability to be self-reflective and self-aware in the role of shelter counsellor.

Demonstrates awareness of the personal impact of VAW work, and creates and uses a personal well-being plan in order to deal with the impact of the work.

Demonstrates ability to adhere to professional standards in all facets of shelter work; with clients, with co-workers, and with the public.

Demonstrates knowledge, commitment and ability to create a healthy workplace environment for residents and co-workers.

Demonstrates the ability to incorporate training and professional development into day-to-day work.

DECISION-MAKING:

Constantly assesses complex variables in individual and group situations. Wrong decisions and inappropriate counselling could have serious results, leading to emotional or physical harm or poor public image for the YWCA. A variety of problems are faced which are generally complex and unique. Decisions involve gathering information and facts, consulting inside and outside the organization to generate ideas and solutions, interpreting many different factors and must generate appropriate solutions. May refer difficult problems and decisions to Shelter or On-Call Supervisors. at any time. Work directly affects the safety, interests or well-being of Crossroads' clients. Actions or advice have an effect on or consequences to clients and to the community as a whole. Situations are often of an immediate, emergency nature. Shelter Counsellors are held accountable for the actions and services provided by themselves.

SUPERVISION:

Receives: Direct supervision from shelter supervisor, including regular and periodic meetings. Receives direction from On-Call Supervisors

Gives: Guidance to volunteers, students and relief staff.

COMMUNICATIONS:

Contacts are within and without the YWCA. Often required to provide leadership, instruction, motivation, coaching, support and guidance on complex issues and materials; resolve difficult situations which could not be resolved or diffused by others; facilitate and create a climate of empowerment; anticipate and be proactive to prevent potential conflicts or difficult situations between clients; between clients and staff members; between staff members, or between the organization and other agencies or individuals. Must often represent the YWCA in a highly visible role and in controversial settings/situations. Has little opportunity to refer problem situations to others.

EFFORT:

Frequent to moderate effort required in lifting & bending.
Extended periods of sitting and standing while performing tasks.
Frequent degree of mental and visual concentration needed.
Crisis de-escalation within the shelter may be needed.

WORKING CONDITIONS:

Conditions may cause considerable and continuous (most of every workday, most days) emotional or physical discomfort due to continuous exposure to many environmental factors and disagreeable internal or external conditions.
Typical conditions are such that a high risk of injury, harm or illness to staff could occur. Conditions could be life-threatening or potentially disabling. More stringent safety measures may be needed to prevent harm, illness or injury; eg follow safety procedures when handling garbage, laundry, room search/room cleaning.
Many stressors result from the shelter environment. Resources are often strained. Atmosphere may occasionally be smoky, unpredictable, crowded, noisy and behaviours may warrant intervention and de-escalation. Potential for staff to be in physical danger due to internal and external variables (violent women and children, violent partners of women). Exposure to contagion (lice, communicable diseases, viruses and infections). Shift work is required. Shifts are continuous and planned breaks are usually not possible. Employee remains at work location for entire shift.

SIGNATURE OF INCUMBENT DATE

SIGNATURE OF SUPERVISOR DATE

SIGNATURE OF EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR DATE

June 2009

PSYCHOSOCIAL DEMANDS

The following table summarizes the psychological (cognitive and emotional) and social (interactive aspects) demands of the Shelter Counsellor position.

Psychosocial Demand	Demand Level	Demand Rating	Comments
Degree of self-supervision required	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. None (fully supervised) 2. Occasionally (supervisor frequently in area) 3. Frequently (supervisor available periodically) 4. Predominantly self-supervised 	4	Varies depending on shift. Supervisor on site – approx. 35hours /week. Evening, overnight, and weekend shifts require an increase level of self-supervision. Decreased level of self-supervision during day shift due to increased availability and response time to access supervisor via telephone, or on site.
Degree of supervision exercised over co-workers.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. No supervisory responsibility 2. Provides work direction only to one co-worker 3. Provides work direction to more than one worker 4. Has full supervision responsibility for other employees 	3	Required to supervise students and volunteers. Training of relief staff. Some occurrence of co-worker supervision, support & debriefing based on level of experiences.
Degree of supervision exercised over clients	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. No supervisory responsibility 2. Provides little supervision over clients. 3. Provides moderate supervision over clients. client 4. Has full supervision responsibility for clients. 	4	Varies depending if single or double staffed. Supervision is required to insure clients are not performing any detrimental behaviours and to be alert to respond for crisis intervention should the need arise.
Deadline pressures	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. None; work pace moderate 2. Occasional pressure 3. Periodic pressure; e.g., month end 4. Majority of work is performed under strict deadline pressures 	2	Required to insure that facilities are prepared for new clients. Timelines to complete various administrative duties. Completion of follow-up telephone calls and statistics required.
Attention to detail required	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Little required 2. Some required for some tasks 3. Significant attention required, for many tasks 4. Intense attention required, for majority of the shift 	3	Counseling involves attending to cues from clients that may reveal pertinent information. Administrative duties require some attention to detail.
Performance of multiple tasks required	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Responsible for doing one task at a time until completion or further direction 2. Responsible for multiple tasks, with clear guidelines or cues about when to perform each task 3. Responsible for multiple tasks; some time-management judgment required 4. Responsible for multiple simultaneous tasks; must judge when to attend to each 	3	Multiple tasking required when supervising/counseling clients and clients' children, performing administrative duties, and attending to all other duties that arise over the course of a shift. May have to deal with crisis situations in the midst of other duties.

Prioritizing	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. None required. Tasks are completed as presented. 2. Required to prioritize tasks of dissimilar importance based on need and timelines. 3. Required to prioritize tasks of similar importance based on need and timelines. 4. Required to prioritize tasks of similar importance during periods of 'crisis' based on personal experiences, need and timelines. <p>*There is no decision matrix provided by the employer when prioritizing 'crisis' situations.</p>	4	Required to select between a number of 'crisis' situations occurring simultaneously. Consequences of decision can range from successful intervention (police involvement, removal from abusive environment) to dire (i.e. life and death, abuse, etc) for client and from reprimand to positive reinforcement of counselor based on decision making process.
Exposure to environmental stimuli	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Very little distracting visual or auditory stimuli 2. Some distracting stimuli during some tasks or portions of the shift 3. Significant distracting stimuli during some tasks or portions of the shift 4. Very noisy, busy, distracting environment for majority of shift 	1 – Night Shift 3 – Day Shift	<p>Visual, auditory and other sensory stimuli caused by clients and co-workers coming and asking for things may pose a distraction to counselor performing duties.</p> <p>Stimuli also present from security measures (i.e. security camera).</p>
Need to work co-operatively with others	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Rarely required 2. Works in proximity with other people, but performs independent duties 3. Required for many tasks 4. Close co-operation required for majority of work 	4	Works in co-operation with clients, co-workers, and supervisor to insure shelter is functioning properly.
Interpersonal Requirements	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Rarely required 2. Provides instruction to others 3. Works with others to provide an exchange of information 4. Works closely with others providing mental, physical, or emotional support 	4	Required during all shifts for interaction with co-workers, supervisors, volunteers, clients, and outside agencies.
Exposure to emotional situations (where clients or the public are emotionally distressed)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Rarely 2. Occasionally 3. Daily 4. Frequently (> 3 times/shift) 	4	Exposure to emotionally distressed clients in person or over telephone (Crisis Calls). Counselor is placed in a position of uncertainty and may be exposed to feelings of guilt, anxiety and helplessness when learning of client outcomes during follow-up or through public sources. Refer to additional information below on Vicarious Trauma.
Exposure to confrontational situations	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Rarely 2. Occasionally; assistance available 3. Occasionally; assistance not available within 5-10 minutes 4. Frequently (< 3 times/day) 	3	Interacting with clients where other counselors may not be in the immediate area.

Self-Awareness	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. No exposure to stressful stimuli. 2. Mild exposure to stressful stimuli. No coping difficulties by worker. 3. Moderated exposure to stressful stimuli. Requires training to manage and intermittent periods of de-briefing. 4. Significant exposure to stressful stimuli. Unguarded or non-trained exposure to environment stimuli poses significant stress and negative, prolonged mental effects on worker. Requires constant de-briefing. 	4	Workers are exposed to constant and uncontrolled levels of exposure to negative stimuli. Due to frequency, duration and intensity of stimuli difficulties are experienced, even with de-briefing to implement coping strategies to separate the worker from the work environment during personal periods.
Emotional and professional management required.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. No overlap of exposure. 2. Mild levels of overlap experienced (monthly). 3. Moderate levels of overlap experienced (weekly). 4. Constant levels of overlap experiences (daily). 	4	Required to retrieve memories, knowledge, or training while placed in an emotional or confrontational situation either in-person, or over the telephone. Frequently requires the ability to multitask to manage situation with appropriate responsibility and accountability.
Responsibility and accountability required	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Errors in judgment/attention would have insignificant consequences 2. Errors in judgment/attention would create inconvenience 3. Errors in judgment/attention would create serious difficulty 4. Errors in judgment/attention may have grave/life-threatening consequences 	4	Errors could have serious consequences for client's and/or staff safety. Occurs in person or over the telephone (Crisis Calls). Facility safety protocols, i.e. door security, safety planning, and proper counseling approach.
Reading literacy required	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. None 2. To recognize words or names only 3. Some, mainly to follow instructions 4. Significant, to read reports, manuals 	3	Reading counseling notes and reports.
Writing literacy required	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Little or none 2. Occasionally in point form; e.g., massages, forms 3. To create hand-written or typed memos or simple letters, with accurate spelling and grammar 4. To create reports or complex documents with accurate grammatical form and structure 	3	Writing counseling notes and reports.
Numerical skills required	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Minimal; e.g., counting 2. Simple arithmetic; e.g., addition, subtraction 3. More complex arithmetic; e.g., division, multiplication,, percentages 4. Abstract mathematical formulae; e.g., accounting 	2	Basic arithmetic operations required.
Communication/Comprehension	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Minimal, deals with simple and concrete information 2. Basic, within well-defined parameters 3. Fluent comprehension and communication of information 4. Comprehension and communication of 	4	Need to be able to communicate problems and emergencies in an accurate fashion. Required to provide detailed de-briefing.

	complex information and ideas		
Memory	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Minimal need to remember information and apply to work tasks 2. Required to remember frequently used information and apply to work tasks regularly 3. Required to remember infrequently used information and/or sequences and apply to work tasks regularly 4. High requirement to remember detailed information and/or sequences and apply to work tasks on an ongoing basis 	4	Recall information provided by clients and recall where to referral clients for further information and/or assistance. Information recollection may be of whole, or part, of memorized information. Access to resources to assist with recollection available.
Copying of data, information	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Not required 2. Minimal required; e.g., phone numbers, name, notes 3. Regularly transfers data from one source to another; e.g., payroll records 4. Frequently required to transfer complex information from source to source with a high degree of accuracy 	2	Required to write case notes and other formal documentation of work done.
Computer literacy	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Not required to use computers in the course of duties 2. Required to use concepts for basic tasks or simple applications 3. Required to use one or more computer programs competently 4. Extensive computer knowledge and problem-solving ability required 	3	Computer use required for administrative duties.

Vicarious Trauma

The Health Canada Guidebook on Vicarious Trauma: Recommended Solutions for Anti-Violence Workers was reviewed to provide insight into the emotional stress demands placed on Shelter Counselors when providing counseling. Vicarious Trauma is defined as the outcome of the “cumulative and built upon memories obtained through listening to the stories of one inhumane act of cruelty after another. It is difficult to objectively rate the frequency and intensity of emotional stress demand placed on the Shelter Counselor, as each Counselor is unique in their ability to cope. Therefore; a number of comments reviewed in the Guidebook are quoted below to provide some insight into this demand.

Vicarious Trauma creates a permanent, subtle or marked change in the personal, political, spiritual and professional outlook of the counselor or advocate. Vicarious trauma has a life-changing effect on individuals, ultimately affecting their view of the world and their relationships and connections to family, friends and community.”

“The empathetic response of the staff and volunteers is at the core of the commitment to the service. It is this empathy that creates the greatest risk and vulnerability to vicarious trauma. Self-awareness, self-assessment and self-care are critical to prevent a toxic, unhealthy build-up of the negative and invasive effects.”

It appears that Vicarious Trauma may pose a positive and negative effect on the counselor.

Positive – “There may be an awakening of feelings, including the passion for social justice and the joy and celebration of working with women.”

Negative – “The heavy weighting of the negative and damaging effects of vicarious trauma makes finding and maintaining a healthy balance a significant challenge.”

“Counselors with unrealistically high ideals, or those who excessively fantasize about rescuing their clients or plot revenge, or are overly invested in meeting clients’ needs will likely become more affected by the work.”

“In a study released in 1995, they provide evidence that counselors who have personal trauma history show more disruptions, particularly in self-trust, self-esteem and self-intimacy, than staff who do not have a personal history of trauma. Interestingly, the study suggests that therapists with a history of violence who continue to commit to work on a longer term basis are healthier with fewer effects.”

Should signs of Vicarious Trauma be recognized, the Shelter Counselor has access to resources for management. Section 2.4 Personal Solutions of the Guidebook offers information on self-care practices. It is also noted that Vicarious Trauma workshops and training sessions are provided.

“All staff experience some symptoms or effects of vicarious trauma. Each individual will likely have a personal self-care plan, some more developed than others.”

Source - Health Canada Guidebook on Vicarious Trauma: Recommended Solutions for Anti-Violence Workers, copyrighted Her Majesty the Queen in Right of Canada 2001.

Job Analysis Confirmation Sheet

The job demands analysis report reflects an accurate determination of the psychosocial demands of the Shelter Counsellor.

Name:

Signature:

Date:

Union Representative

Shelter Counsellor Supervisor

Job Analyst