

Sexual Assault Counselor Volunteer Job Description

Rape Trauma Services (RTS) is a non-profit, volunteer-based organization that provides a variety of services to children and adults who have been directly or indirectly hurt by the trauma of sexual assault. Sexual assault is an act of violence and cruelty which knows no boundaries of race, ethnicity, culture, gender, age, sexual orientation, religion, socio-economic status, or physical/developmental ability. We encourage those from all backgrounds to become volunteer counselors so that our services will become more accessible to all.

Required Qualifications

- At least 18 years of age
- Ability to maintain strict rules of confidentiality
- Access to a private phone
- Access to a reliable form of transportation and ability to arrive at San Mateo County Medical Center within 30 – 45 minutes
- Ability to be assertive with law enforcement, medical and legal personnel, especially to advocate on behalf of survivors who choose to report their assault to the police
- Dependability, maturity and punctuality
- Ability to effectively interact with people from a variety of cultures and backgrounds
- Adherence to RTS' philosophy, protocols, procedures, and policies
- Ability to pass Live Scan (Background Check)
- Ability to follow instructions and deadlines for documentation of service activities
- Ability to be empathic, respectful, and non-judgmental
- Fluency in English language required for training

Fluency in non-English language strongly desired.

We seek volunteers who share our vision and philosophy including core beliefs such as (1) we all have been affected by violence and inequities; (2) healing from the effects of those experiences is a life-long process; and (3) commitment to one's healing is a key to our well-being, effective relationships with others, a healthy and equitable work environment, and meaningful political change.

Initial Training - *Trainings are held in the Winter/Spring, Summer & Fall*

Those interested in becoming volunteer Sexual Assault Counselors (SACs) at RTS must participate in an 80-hour California state-certified training through RTS. Topics include listening skills, myths and realities of sexual assault, responses to trauma, legal issues, and the relationship between sexual assault and oppression (e.g. racism, sexism, heterosexism, etc.).

We expect all trainees to attend all trainings.

Ongoing Training

SAC training is ongoing, with continuing education and debriefing sessions held the third Wednesday of every month. SACs are required to attend at least 10 of these monthly meetings each year as an active volunteer.

One Year Commitment

After completing 80 hours of initial training, RTS asks that Sexual Assault Counselors commit to fulfilling at least one year of service (52 shifts). Ideally shifts would be completed in twelve consecutive months. We understand that not every volunteer is able to do so because work/school schedules, vacations, and unexpected life events. Thus, we ask that volunteers commit to at least one year of service to survivors and their families. After serving one year, SACs are offered opportunities to provide in-person peer counseling and to join our speaker's bureau.

Crisis Line Shifts

SACs offer peer counseling, information, resources, and referrals to survivors of sexual assault and to other concerned individuals who call our 24-hour crisis line. Our phone system, runs through an answering service, which allows SACs to take crisis line calls at home or any other place where there is privacy.

In addition, when a survivor chooses to report his/her assault, SACs provide in-person advocacy during legal interviews and/or medical exams at San Mateo County Medical Center, Law Enforcement, Youth Services Center and Adult Detention Facilities. **SACs are expected to arrive within 30-45 minutes of being notified.**

SAC is expected to take a minimum of **one crisis line shift each week for one year**. Each day is divided into the following shifts: 7am-1pm, 1pm-7pm and an overnight shift from 7pm-7am. SACs are also expected to make follow-up calls to those they have supported in-person.

Training Fee

We ask all trainees to contribute *at least* **\$150** for the 80-hour initial training. Trainees who are able to contribute more support scholarships we set aside for those who need to reduce or waive their training fee.

Benefits

- Invaluable experience for people wanting to pursue a career in counseling, social work, psychology, public policy, medicine, and law
- An immensely fulfilling experience
- State Certified Sexual Assault Counselor Training
- References or letters of recommendation for a job well done

Application Process

1. Attend a mandatory Information Session prior to sending in your application
2. Send your completed application with a copy of your current state-issued photo ID to volunteer@rapetraumaservices.org
3. Those invited to interview with our staff will be connected via email

Please email our Volunteer Program Coordinator at volunteer@rapetraumaservices.org with any questions or to discuss your interest in becoming a SAC.

COUNSELING PHILOSOPHY

Healing is a choice.

We assume you're here because you were hurt. We're here because we have anger and sadness about that... and because we believe people can heal and that you deserve support. We also assume you've made, are considering making (or someone who cares about you wants you to make) one of the most powerful choices you will make in your life: the choice to heal from what you've suffered. We believe healing from traumatic experience is difficult but possible. It requires courage. It takes time. It can be learned.

Developing and sharing our beliefs about healing is important.

Most of what we offer as valuable to learn about healing we've learned from other survivors of trauma or from our own healing. In our work together, we may find our beliefs differ. We want this to be a safe place to discuss those differences. We assume you have unique gifts for recovery and want to help you gain even greater access to them. To this end, one aspect of our work is to make explicit the beliefs from which we work. Healing happens over time and in many ways. It often happens in moments when you least expect it.

Counseling should help you become more fluent with your own natural powers for healing. You are the one who knows what you're ready to heal and when you're ready to heal it. One of our goals is to help you prepare for those important moments when opportunities for healing present themselves.

Telling(or depicting) and believing our stories is fundamental to healing.

Healing happens in many ways. We work from a central belief that sharing our stories in a safe and caring context is, for most people, a critical step to achieving the ultimate goal of emotional healing: the dynamic ability to believe, meaningfully accept and validate our own experience. While we believe depicting trauma you've suffered is pivotal to healing, you choose what to tell and when to tell it. A focus on stories only means depicting whatever events have meaning for you, events that need to be understood and emotionally integrated.

Healing means learning how to know and have our feelings.

Another core belief is that we can learn to allow and be safe with the natural feelings evoked in remembering and meaningfully understanding painful experience. Contrary to popular belief, expressing these feelings is central to the healthy self. Tragically, most of us have been taught to disdain feelings. Emotions are powerful information, directing us to identify and explore the meaning of experience. They allow us to reconnect with parts of ourselves that may have gone into hiding when we were hurt. Allowing natural emotions, as well as developing awareness of body sensations, helps us recover the essential vitality we were born with, diminished in suffering traumatic experience. Thus, a primary task of healing is to explore the conditioning we've experienced which has kept us either from feelings related to particular experiences or the fluent emotional life which offers basic tools we need for healing any hurtful event.

Healing means helping our bodies move through the survival responses to experiencing overwhelming events, allowing us to restore a state of ease.

A common aftereffect of trauma is to get "stuck" in a survival stage of fight, flight, freeze, dissociation or collapse. Developing adequate AWARENESS of physical sensations as the language of the body for both surviving and healing trauma is essential to resolving overwhelm, discharging blocked energy and restoring your natural resilience. Recovering the natural aptitude for *somatic awareness*, in and of itself, allows crucial change to occur.

You are the expert in your healing.

We are not the experts regarding your healing. You are. We believe each person has perfect wisdom about what is needed to heal. But most of us have not been taught how to listen well to that wisdom. We will encourage you to listen to authentic inner messages that will guide you to meaningful understandings of your experience. Wisdom may be found in feelings and sensations you newly identify, or in *deepening* awareness you already possess. Commonly, our wisdom is confusingly cloaked in the "acting out or in" we do to avoid uncomfortable thoughts, feelings or sensations. In our own time, we can learn that embracing our suffering is how we set ourselves free to be all we were meant to be.

“Acting out” from the wounds we have suffered hinders healing.

Suffering happens in cycles. If we don't heal from what has happened to us, we are likely to tell our stories through destructive behaviors towards ourselves or others, causing hurt in ways literally or symbolically similar to how we've been hurt. You are the one who knows what you're ready to heal and when you're ready to heal it. Our work at RTS is about stopping *cycles* of suffering. Consequently, we're committed to identifying 'acting out' or 'reenacting' behaviors as destructive of healing. If we think you may be hurting yourself or another in ways that you were hurt, or in any way, we will bring that up as an issue to discuss. To fail to do so would be to tell you that what was done to you was okay or that we condone the behavior of those who observed your suffering and stood silent. We do not judge people. We are committed to stopping hurtful behaviors.



Volunteer Application

Training you are applying to: Winter/Spring Summer Fall

Applicant Information

Full Name: _____ Date: _____
Last First M.I.

Address: _____
Street Address Apartment/Unit #

City State ZIP Code

Phone: _____ Email _____

How did you hear about us? _____
 (please be specific -- e.g. google search, friend's name, etc.)

Language Skills: _____

Ability to Commit

SACs commit to fulfilling AT LEAST one year of service (one shift per week). Ideally shifts would be completed in 12 consecutive months. However, we understand that not every volunteer is able to do so because of work/school schedules, vacations, and unexpected life events. Thus, we ask that volunteers commit to a total of at least 52 shifts. RTS offers this training and mentoring program for a nominal fee, however, the training is ONLY provided for those committed to fulfilling at least one year of service as a volunteer.

Please indicate your ability to commit to the following:

One shift/week for at least 12 months	YES <input type="checkbox"/>	NO <input type="checkbox"/>	80-hour State Certified Training	YES <input type="checkbox"/>	NO <input type="checkbox"/>
Attendance to 10 out of 12 monthly ongoing training (Ongoing per year you volunteer)	YES <input type="checkbox"/>	NO <input type="checkbox"/>	\$150 Volunteer Training Fee	YES <input type="checkbox"/>	NO <input type="checkbox"/>
Do you have access to reliable transportation? (Public transportation would not be applicable)	YES <input type="checkbox"/>	NO <input type="checkbox"/>	Live Scan Fingerprinting (background check)	YES <input type="checkbox"/>	NO <input type="checkbox"/>

Do you have concerns about these commitments? (Please comment below)

Do you understand that you may NOT attain your Sexual Assault Counselor (SAC) certification if:

1. You miss any of the mandatory sessions or more than two sessions of training (i.e, 6 hours) YES NO
2. You fail a Live Scan Fingerprint Background Check YES NO

Please list your current major commitments such as family, employment, schooling, community involvement, or volunteer work.

The following questions may be answered on a separate document if you need more space

Please describe any employment, education, or volunteer experience you believe may be relevant to your future as a Sexual Assault Counselor.

Why do you want to work with victims/survivors of sexual abuse and assault as well as other trauma from violence or abuse?

Please describe your beliefs about the cause of sexual abuse and assault (i.e., Why does sexual abuse and assault happen?). Your response can be your personal observation or social, political, psychological analysis you identify with.

References & Background Check

Please provide a minimum of three references:

Name:	Relationship/Years Known:	Phone number:	Email Address:
1. _____	_____	_____	_____
2. _____	_____	_____	_____
3. _____	_____	_____	_____
4. _____	_____	_____	_____
5. _____	_____	_____	_____

How long have you resided in California? _____

If less than 5 years, please provide the cities and states you lived in for the past 5 years with dates.

City, State	Dates Resided
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

By providing the information above, I give permission for Rape Trauma Services to conduct a preliminary background check, including but not limited to searches in the national and state level sex offender registries. _____ (initial here)

Optional

This section is optional. However, we invite you to provide us with information about various facets of who you are. This information is valuable to us as an agency striving to effectively serve the diverse population of San Mateo County.

Ethnic ID: _____ Age: _____

Religious/Spiritual Affiliation: _____ Sexual Orientation: _____

Gender Identification: _____ Disability: _____

Describe any accommodations you may require during training or while performing your volunteer duties:

Acknowledgment

By signing below, I am acknowledging that I have answered these questions to the best of my knowledge and that I have read and understand the commitments of a volunteer as outlined in the Sexual Assault Counselor Job Description.

Signature: _____

Date: _____