Sample Advocate Recruitment and Application Materials

(Adapted From the Santa Fe Rape Crisis Center)
Sample Letter Responding to an Inquiry

Dear Prospective Advocate,

Thank you for your interest in the Santa Fe Rape Crisis Center (SFRCC) Advocacy Program. Enclosed you will find general information about the Advocacy Program, a training schedule, and an application.

The next volunteer training, a 40-hour intensive program, will begin on [DATE]. The dates and times of each training session are included on the attached schedule. The training will include presentations on such topics as sexual assault, child sexual abuse, crisis intervention techniques, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), handling suicide calls, crisis call procedures, advocate self-care, grief and healing, domestic violence and domestic violence crisis intervention, role plays, and diversity training. Participants in the training include individuals from the Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner’s (SANE) Initiative, the District Attorney’s Office and its Domestic Violence Unit, Esperanza, the Victim/Witness Assistance Program, the New Mexico State Crime Lab, Child Protective Services, and our professional clinical and administrative staff.

Our training is a time-intensive but rewarding experience that will prepare you to effectively assist and advocate for survivors of sexual and domestic violence. Once you have completed the initial training, the time commitment to the Advocacy Program becomes much more manageable, consisting of one monthly meeting (held from 6 to 8 p.m. on the third Tuesday of each month), and four hotline shifts per month, which can be done from home or by digital pager.

Volunteering with the SFRCC Advocacy Program is not only a way to help those in crisis, it is an opportunity to join a helping community of dynamic people. Advocates are invited to participate in regular group activities, from hiking trips to potlucks. The work is difficult, but the rewards are many, including the chance to make wonderful friends.

To begin the application process, please complete the enclosed forms; then call me to schedule an interview. Thank you again for your interest in volunteering at the SFRCC. I look forward to welcoming you into our advocate community.

Sincerely,

Advocacy Program Supervisor
Sample Job Description

The Role of the Volunteer Advocate

Advocates at the Santa Fe Rape Crisis Center staff our 24-hour hotline from their homes, assuming responsibility for a minimum of four shifts per month. In addition, advocates also provide crisis advocacy services at the Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner’s (SANE’s) Unit at St. Vincent’s Hospital to assist survivors of recent sexual assault. The role of the advocate is to provide information and resources, normalize callers in crisis, and give unbiased emotional support to survivors of sexual assault and their families.

Volunteer advocates are the backbone of our agency and provide a round-the-clock safety net for those in crisis. Through training and ongoing education, our volunteers enhance existing skills and learn new ones to offer professional and compassionate crisis-intervention services for the Northern New Mexico community.

Qualifications for Women and Men

1. 21 years of age or older.
2. Resident of Santa Fe County for at least 6 months.
3. Settled in a job and/or home situation.
4. Has a car in good working condition.
5. Able to respond in person at the hospital.
6. Has a telephone.
7. Has no current personal upheavals that might obstruct work with victims.
8. Willing to participate in medical or legal advocacy.

Training

Volunteers for the Advocacy Program are required to attend a 40-hour comprehensive training program, scheduled on evenings and weekends to accommodate most work schedules. The training thoroughly prepares volunteers to handle crisis calls and assist survivors of recent sexual assault and domestic violence at St. Vincent’s Hospital. Moreover, it provides information specific to the diverse and unique population of Northern New Mexico. Required monthly meetings featuring debriefing sessions and educational in-services keep advocates up-to-date on new developments and provide ongoing support for this challenging role.
Sample Application

Date ____________________________

PERSONAL INFORMATION

Name _________________________________________________________________
Address __________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________
Phone: (h) ___________________________ (w) _____________________________
Date of Birth ________________ Social Security Number ___________________

How did you hear about our program? _______________________________________
______________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________

Current Employer/School ________________________________________________
Address __________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________
Phone: ________________________________________________________________

Emergency Contact ______________________________________________________
Address __________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________
Phone: (h) ___________________________ (w) _____________________________
REFERENCES

We will use the employer listed above as a reference. Please list three additional references we may contact, giving complete and current addresses and phone numbers because we conduct reference checks by mail.

Name _______________________________ Relationship _______________________________
Address _______________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________
Phone: (h) ___________________________ (w) _____________________________

Name _______________________________ Relationship _______________________________
Address _______________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________
Phone: (h) ___________________________ (w) _____________________________

Name _______________________________ Relationship _______________________________
Address _______________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________
Phone: (h) ___________________________ (w) _____________________________
QUESTIONS

Please answer the following questions as completely as possible. Feel free to include extra pages if you need additional space.

1. Briefly describe your employment background.

2. Describe your educational background and training.

3. List any special skills and/or interests that you would be willing to share with the center (e.g., computer skills, graphic design skills, artistic skills, fundraising).

4. Why do you want to volunteer with SFRCC?

5. What do you think you can offer to SFRCC as an advocate?

6. Describe your own experience (if any) with sexual violence, harassment, or domestic violence.

7. Working closely with issues of sexual abuse and domestic violence can be stressful. Describe the types of support available to you.
8. Do you speak Spanish? Any Native American languages? Any other languages?

9. Can you commit to attending team meetings and/or in-service meetings on the third Tuesday of each month from 6 to 8 p.m.?

10. Can you commit to this position for at least 1 year?

11. What do you hope to gain from this experience?

12. Is there anything else you would like us to know about you?
Sample Advocate Interview

Applicant:

Interviewer:

Date of Interview:

Duration of Interview:

Why do you want to volunteer at the SFRCC?

What experience do you have helping others (formally or informally)?

What do you hope to gain from this experience?

Can you identify any issues in your life that might make this work difficult for you (i.e., a history of sexual and/or domestic violence, depression, drug/alcohol abuse, self-harm, or any other kind of trauma)? If you are a survivor of sexual and/or domestic violence, how have you dealt with this trauma?

If a crisis call triggered personal issues or if you ever felt upset after taking a crisis call, how would you seek support? Would you be willing to seek counseling?

Tell me about drug and alcohol use in your life. Can you commit to remaining drug/alcohol-free while on shift?
Tell me about stress in your life. How do you cope with it? How busy are you?

What is the level of stability in your life? Have you recently experienced any major changes (a move, a career change, a change in a significant relationship, a loss)?

Are you able to commit to the SFRCC for at least 1 year and attend a mandatory monthly meeting held on a Tuesday night?

Are you willing to comply with New Mexico state law and report any/all incidences of sexual violence or abuse perpetrated on a minor, if you have identifying information?

Is there anything else about yourself you would like us to know?
Sample Volunteer Advocate Contract

Responsibilities of the Volunteer Advocate

1. Maintaining strict confidentiality to protect the privacy of all clients.

2. Attending all parts of the initial advocacy training.

3. Attending a monthly advocate team meeting, including in-service presentations, and contacting the team leader or program coordinator if you are unable to attend. Arrangements for scheduling must be made prior to the meeting if absence is inevitable; otherwise, the team leader will schedule the advocate and the advocate will be responsible for filling those shifts.

4. Making at least a 1-year commitment to the program.

5. Being on call, from home or by a pager, according to a monthly prearranged schedule.

6. Being completely drug-and alcohol-free while on shift or backing up a shift.

7. Calling the answering service at the beginning of your shift to verify your phone number, and updating as needed.

8. Providing information, referrals, or emotional support over the phone to any hotline caller, and responding to the Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner (SANE) Unit or St. Vincent’s Hospital to assist survivors of sexual or domestic violence.

9. Never entering into a professional relationship with a SFRCC client/hotline caller.

10. Never going to a victim’s home or the scene of the alleged crime without having a police escort and contacting a team leader or the program supervisor.

11. Reporting a brief description of each case to the office staff at the beginning of the next working day.

12. Providing a written report with details of each case within 48 hours of the call.

13. Reporting any incident of child sexual abuse (age 17 or under) or alleged/suspected child abuse to the Children Youth and Families Department (CYFD) and law enforcement immediately after receiving a disclosure. This report is required by law.

14. Consulting with office staff before maintaining ongoing involvement in any case.

15. Doing followup on cases when appropriate and providing information regarding that followup to the program supervisor.
Responsibilities of the Rape Crisis Center Staff

1. Providing an initial, intensive 40-hour training program for advocates, as well as follow-up training and supervision in specific areas to enhance their job performance, as appropriate.

2. Providing debriefing and supervision to advocates in the office and via phone calls during and after the immediate crisis in which they are involved, as appropriate.

3. Providing support services to advocates in the areas of information, referral, backup advocacy, and short-term personal counseling pertaining to their role as an advocate.

4. Providing evaluations of the advocate’s performance at the request of the advocate or SFRCC supervisor.

5. Other responsibilities of the Santa Fe Rape Crisis Center, as agreed.

I understand and agree to accept the responsibilities outlined above. I understand that CONFIDENTIALITY is the primary task of all advocates; therefore, I will use only the office staff and advocate staff for consultation on cases. I understand if I violate any part of this contract, my services with the Santa Fe Rape Crisis Center will be terminated.

Date _______________________

Advocate-in-Training __________________________

Supervisor __________________________
Sample Reference Letter

(Date)

(Name) has applied to serve as a volunteer advocate at the Santa Fe Rape Crisis Center. This applicant has given us your name as a reference.

Volunteer advocates at our rape crisis center commit a certain portion of their time each month to staff our 24-hour crisis line. They also assist survivors of recent sexual assault or domestic violence at the local emergency department or at the Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner’s Unit. Some of the qualities we seek in an advocate are honesty, integrity, reliability, a healthy life balance, compassion, and commitment. The contribution our volunteers make to our organization and the services they provide to survivors of violence and their families are both critical and invaluable; therefore, we believe it is essential for us to have an accurate sense of each individual applicant.

Please provide us with any insights that will help us determine the suitability of this applicant for a volunteer position with the Santa Fe Rape Crisis Center Advocacy Program. Your comments would be most helpful in our evaluation process. It is important that you give as honest and complete a summary of your impressions as possible.

Please complete the enclosed questionnaire. Feel free to include additional comments in the space provided at the end of the questionnaire. A self-addressed stamped envelope has been included for your convenience.

Thank you for your cooperation!

Sincerely,

Advocacy Program Supervisor
Sample Personal Reference Questionnaire

Volunteer Applicant: _____________________________________________________

Please circle the number in the scale (ranging from low to high) that reflects your opinion of this prospective volunteer. Few people will fall in the highest or lowest categories. Use these extremes to indicate a significant impression about this person.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Low</th>
<th>Average</th>
<th>High</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. Dependability (follows through with commitments)
   1   2   3   4   5

2. Reliability in accepting responsibility (accepts responsibility for actions and decisions)
   1   2   3   4   5

3. Evidence of good judgment in daily relations
   1   2   3   4   5

4. Personal ethics
   1   2   3   4   5

5. Flexibility (adapts to changes and accepts people with different values and lifestyles)
   1   2   3   4   5

6. Stability in applicant’s life
   1   2   3   4   5

7. Gets along well with others
   1   2   3   4   5

[Turn over for additional questions.]
Sexual Assault Advocate/Counselor Training

How long have you known the applicant and in what capacity?

Do you think this person is suitable to be a volunteer at the Santa Fe Rape Crisis Center?

Additional comments:

Signature ______________________________

Date ______________________________