

**Welcome to  
Nanaimo Family Life Association**

**Volunteer Counselling Program  
Training Orientation Package**

**Revised July 2006**

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**NANAIMO FAMILY LIFE ASSOCIATION**

## **VOLUNTEER COUNSELLING PROGRAM OVERVIEW**

### **History**

The agency was established in 1967 for the purpose of providing counselling and referral services to families in need of assistance. In 1974, a coordinator was hired primarily to handle intake calls, supervise office volunteers, and to provide support services to the counsellors. The counsellors, at this point, were a small group of committed individuals. In the 1974-1977 period, a focus of the agency was group work – for counselling, personal development and support. The coordinator did a lot of group counselling herself, initiated counsellor training and counsellor recruitment.

A period of growth, not only for Nanaimo Family Life Association but for social services in general, began in the late 70's. The agency experienced an increasing demand for individual personal counselling, expanded into the provision of Child and Youth Care Counselling Services, and greatly increased its staff. The Executive Director and the Board started to focus on establishing administrative procedures to deal with this growth. The Executive Director's role became more administrative, with less time for the nurturing of the Counselling Program. The counsellors' need for the continuation of strong support and supervision and the increasing demand for counselling services led to the hiring of a Counselling Coordinator - whose role was the nurturing of the Counselling Program.

In 1978, because of the continued demand for counselling, the Training and Education Committee focused on upgrading the quality of counsellor training and began discussions about development of a certification program through Malaspina College. In the early 1980's the Counselling Skills Level 1 and II courses were developed cooperatively between Malaspina College and Nanaimo Family Life Association as a pre-requisite to entering the lay counsellor training.

In 1984 the formal certificate program as it exists today was developed. Every year approximately 12 volunteers are selected to go through the training program, which is to ensure a constant flow of volunteers in the Volunteer Counselling Program. This type of training enhances the community, as these volunteers are also involved in their own neighborhoods, families, schools, and other community settings.

Today a Program Coordinator and two Adult, Youth and Family Counsellors, with over 35 Volunteer Counsellors, provide services. Our current mandate is to provide support to individuals and families with children.

Interested individuals are invited to apply for our Counsellor Training Program after completing Counselling Skills Level I and II at Malaspina University-College. Upon successful completion of the supervised counselling training, the trainees are presented with a joint Nanaimo Family Life Association/Malaspina University-College Certificate.

## Purpose

It is the purpose of the Volunteer Counselling Program to offer services designed to support individuals and families to better cope with the often-complex problems that are part of life. Our goal is to provide short-term adult or adolescent individual and relationship counselling (up to 8 sessions) and supportive/educational group programs to clients who are experiencing situational life crisis. Appropriate issues to be dealt with within this program include:

- Emotional health/stress
- Anger/conflict management
- Relationships
- Family-of-origin
- Communication/assertiveness
- Grief/loss
- Work/School
- Health/illness

Our program offers a variety of support/educational group programs throughout the year (depending on interest) such as:

- Triple P Parenting – Parents of Teens
- Essential Skills for Relationships – Youth
- Building Relationships: Steps Towards Change

The Volunteer Counselling Program is **NOT** designed to respond to the following concerns:

- Mental illness
- Long term emotional disorders
- Addiction
- High risk suicide
- Family violence
- Recent sexual abuse/memories

Persons with these concerns are supported to connect with other appropriate community resources.

## Intake Process

Anyone may refer to an individual to the NFLA Volunteer Counselling Program however; the people referred must then initiate contact with the program themselves. A significant number of clients are self-referred.

## Adolescents

Adolescents 14-18 years of age initiate counselling by meeting with an AYFC for a one to one information/assessment interview before being matched with a volunteer counsellor.

# NANAIMO FAMILY LIFE ASSOCIATION

## TRAINING INFORMATION

The Volunteer Counselling Program appreciates your interest in our Volunteer Counselling Training. We have been providing quality volunteer counselling to the Nanaimo community since 1967. The program is funded by The Ministry of Children and Family Development, United Way, Bingo revenue, fundraising and fees for counselling services.

We offer accessible and affordable individual and relationship counselling to clients 14 years and older. Clients are most often coping with the often-complex problems that are part of life. We cover a wide variety of issues including relationship difficulties, communication skills, self-esteem, managing anger and conflict, grief and loss, emotional and health issues, and stress. We do not provide service to those with active drug and alcohol issues, mental illness, current sexual or physical abuse issues, or needing immediate crisis intervention. We focus on helping clients find their own solutions and the means to make constructive changes. Clients are charged a fee for service according to family income ranging from \$1-40 per session. No one is denied service due to lack of money.

### **What is a “Skilled Helper”?**

Skilled Helpers are trained by professionals to provide volunteer counselling services and receive ongoing professional supervision of their counselling. This training does not give them formal credentials of a professional counsellor; however, it does give them the skills to provide a high quality of service to our clients and to be highly valued within the Nanaimo community.

At Nanaimo Family Life Association (NFLA), volunteer counsellors provide affordable and accessible counselling to those who cannot afford counselling from private practitioners and for those that do not qualify for service from other programs. Volunteers provide all counselling services.

### **What is the training like?**

You will meet as a group of about 12 trainees with the training staff every week from the beginning of January to the end of March. In addition to Saturday classes, there will be several evening workshops and opportunities to practice skills with peers. The training will be comprised of a personal growth and a skill development component.

Throughout the training we will focus on personal growth, self-awareness, empathy, and clear communication skills. Many different issues will be explored and you will have the opportunity to clarify personal values, beliefs, and biases. You will also have the opportunity to practice skill development. The skills training will be from a client-centered, solution-focused, and family systems perspective.

The training is valued at \$750 per person. We ask for \$150 to be paid in advance of the training. The remaining amount (\$600) is provided in service hours. In exchange for approximately 120 hours of quality training you agree to return 100 hours of direct client contact and formal supervision after graduation. Formal supervision includes attendance at Support Circles, Monthly Learning Opportunities and scheduled evaluations. There will be a 16 session probationary period (with video evaluations after 8 and 16 counselling sessions) following completion of the training and then once per year as long as you continue to volunteer.

### **What happens when I have completed the training portion?**

#### **How do I return my hours?**

Upon completion of the training you will receive a Certificate of Completion jointly from NFLA and Malapsina-University College. You will see individual clients that are matched to your counselling experience and will receive encouragement and support through regular supervision. You schedule your own appointments with clients assigned to you, collect fees, record session statistics, and record notes. You are required to attend a minimum of 3 monthly Support Circles throughout the year and a minimum of 3 Monthly Learning Opportunities per year that have a counselling component. We offer 10 Monthly Learning Opportunities per year on a variety of counselling topics. Bi-yearly, you will also be required to attend our Suicide Intervention Training.

Besides our primary service to individual adults, we also provide Relationship and Adolescent Counselling. You will need to complete second-level training to counsel adolescents and couples. Requirements for this training are the completion of 30 hours of direct client service for adolescent training and 50 hours of direct client service for relationship training.

Additionally we offer volunteer counsellors opportunities to socialize and build relationships with the community of counsellors and staff at NFLA.

### **Why do people volunteer for this program?**

What we often hear is that our participants value the depth of exploration offered, the quality of training that is noticeable in the interactions with their own family, friends, and co-workers, and the experience of being a part of a group of committed caring individuals.

Most participants value the opportunity to help others in the community who could not otherwise afford such service. Some enjoy the type of contact and learning counselling offers that they do not get in their main work. For those considering counselling as a career it provides valuable direct experience and may enhance their application to college and university programs.

The training itself does not give you the qualifications to become a professional counsellor. However, it may enhance your ability to secure work in related areas when listed on your resume as a volunteer experience and training.

## **What stops people from volunteering for this program?**

This program involves a large long-term commitment and not everyone can find the time to participate in regular weekends or evenings over the course of the training, nor commit to returning client contact hours for an additional 1-2 year period. If you are looking at job prospects outside the Nanaimo area or planning anything that would prevent you from fulfilling this commitment this would not be the time to apply.

People may choose not to apply because they are in crises and not able to embark on three months of intensive group training, nor able to imagine helping others at this time of their lives. They may choose to apply at another time.

Participants need to be interested and willing to look within themselves at a deep level to explore who they present themselves to be and who they are authentically. This can be a profound and challenging learning time.

## **What will I have at the end of the training?**

We hope you can say what others have said:

- "It has been a remarkable life changing experience."
- "I have come away with a deeper sense of self and enhanced my relationships."
- "I have a better ability to be present with clients in a way that helps and empowers."

You will be qualified as a volunteer counsellor to offer this valuable service – not as a professional counsellor who can see clients privately. Many volunteer counsellors remain with us for several years and find opportunities to be challenged and rewarded by their association with the Program and the Agency.

## **There are many applicants. On what basis do you select trainees?**

We select a diverse group of individuals of different ages, occupations, and backgrounds. We look for your ability to commit to attending and completing the training program, and returning the 100 hours of service to the community. It helps to have been a client in individual, relationship, or group counselling and to be committed to your own personal growth.

We look for our ability to connect with you as self-aware, compassionate people – what we would want our clients to experience. Unfortunately, we can only take 12 individuals per training group but get many more applications. So, if you are not selected this year we do encourage you to apply again.

## **What happens after I haven sent in my application?**

The staff reviews all applications and selects approximately 18 people to come for group interviews. Interviews will be about 2 hours long and will have 4 potential trainees and 3 interviewers per session. All those who apply will be contacted to be told is they have been selected or not for training.

Following the interview you will receive a telephone call asking for your acceptance. If you accept, you will be asked to pick up a Criminal Record Check form and take it to the RCMP.

Both the training program and the actual counselling are demanding, but the rewards are great. The Volunteer Counselling Program thanks you for your interest and your desire to be part of the important volunteer community of Nanaimo.

## **NANAIMO FAMILY LIFE ASSOCIATION**

### **VOLUNTEER COUNSELLOR JOB DESCRIPTION**

The Volunteer Counsellor reports to the Adult, Youth & Family Counsellor(s) and when necessary to the Program Coordinator. Volunteer Counsellors enable clients to identify, understand, and overcome personal, family, and community-based problems through the establishment of realistic goals.

Volunteer Counsellors provide one to one individual and relationship counselling. Volunteer Counsellors provide service hours based on time availability that may include evenings and weekends.

#### **DUTIES**

1. Responsible for providing agreed upon hours of counselling to clients using a client-centered, solution-focused and family systems perspective.
2. Contacts clients, makes client appointments, and books counselling rooms.
3. Maintains records of assigned clients until their files are closed. Takes session notes, fills out forms, and writes letters in consultation with the program staff. Ensures client files are kept secure and confidential in accordance with program policy.
4. Records accurate statistics of client sessions.
5. Collects fee for sessions, writes receipts, and keeps an accurate record of monies received.
6. Informs staff when they require clients and when they want time off or vacation.
7. Listens to voice mail messages on a regular basis.
8. Maintains an adequate knowledge of community resources to meet client needs.
9. Responsible for keeping informed about changes in policies and procedures.
10. Regularly attends support and supervision.
11. Adheres to NFLA client confidentiality/suicide protocols. Reports all critical incidents or issues of substance to the AYFC and/or Program Coordinator.
12. Participates in and receives performance appraisals.
13. Promotes self-interest in development within the counselling field.
14. Participates in the evaluation of program effectiveness.
15. Submits approved expenses to the Program Coordinator.

## **ATTRIBUTES OF AN EFFECTIVE COUNSELLOR**

1. The counsellor understands that the most basic motivation of people is toward self-fulfillment and that the reward of counselling is to share in that experience.
2. The counsellor demonstrates stability in her/his personal life that positively affects security in career, family and community relationships.
3. The counsellor conveys a willingness to be actively involved in personal growth. The ability of a counsellor to facilitate growth in another is directly tied to her/his own openness, willingness to change, and recognition that personal growth is a life-long process.
4. The counsellor's goal is to accept people as they, understand that each person possesses her/his own set of values and beliefs.
5. The counsellor possesses the ability to relate with people of different ethnic, socioeconomic, educational or cultural backgrounds.
6. A level of genuineness is present in the counsellor. This implies the ability to be truly one's self with others.
7. The counsellor has the capacity to empathize and to communicate her/his empathy to others.

# NANAIMO FAMILY LIFE ASSOCIATION VOLUNTEER COUNSELLING PROGRAM

## TRAINING COMMITMENT

The objective of the Volunteer Counsellor Training is to prepare Volunteer Counsellors to provide effective short-term counselling intervention from a client-centered, solution-focused, and family systems perspective; as well as a basic level of assessment and referral to community resources. The training facilitators of the Volunteer Counselling Program are committed to providing the best possible training to meet these objectives.

### **Program Responsibilities:**

Program staff will provide approximately 120 hours of training. On-going regular evaluation of counsellor progress and training will be provided. Knowledge, experience, and skill will be taught, demonstrated, developed, and jointly evaluated in the following areas:

1. Boundary setting and maintenance skills.
2. Verbal and written communication skills.
3. Knowledge of and comfort with diverse populations.
4. Ethical counselling guidelines.
5. Program policies and procedures.
6. Managing conflict and other stresses.
7. Maintaining respectful relationships.
8. Organizing counselling time commitments.
9. Counselling Skills:
  - Client-centered, solution-focused, family systems perspective
  - Assessment and referral
  - Crisis intervention
10. Counselling development:
  - Accessing support and supervision
  - Receiving feedback
  - Taking personal responsibility

**Trainee Responsibilities:**

1. Applicants need to complete the Agency’s **criminal record check** process before acceptance. A form and self-addressed envelope for this purpose will be ready for you to pick up at the front desk once you have accepted into the training. Submit both to the RCMP.
2. Tuition for the basic training is \$750 of which **\$150** is to be paid upon acceptance into the training. The remaining \$600 is to be paid back in service hours by providing counselling for clients of the program.
3. Each graduate trainee is expected to repay **100** hours of direct client service. This service includes a maximum of **2 clients per week, record keeping, and supervision time.**
4. The training session is a time of personal growth. Issues may arise for the trainees that require resolution before they are able to become a Volunteer Counsellor. It is the responsibility of the trainers to review the progress of each participant and make this assessment prior to the practicum portion of the training.
5. Arrangements will be made for participants to repay a prorated amount of the training if they are unable to fulfill their commitment.
6. Following training there will be a **16 session probationary period** when staff and volunteer will jointly evaluate relevant strengths and limitations. A video evaluation occurs after 8 and 16 sessions. Clients provide evaluations of their volunteer counsellor. Depending on the identified areas for development, review could include videos, papers, and demonstrations.
7. After training, counsellors are required to attend a minimum of **3 Support Circles** throughout the year and continue to upgrade their counselling skills and abilities by attending **3 Monthly Learning Opportunities** per year. Bi-yearly counsellors are also required to attend our **Suicide Intervention Training** (counted as a MLO).
8. **Annual supervision** that includes the review of one **video-taped** counselling session.

I, \_\_\_\_\_, have reviewed all of the information in the Volunteer Counselling Training Package. I understand and agree to the terms of this commitment as outlined above.

\_\_\_\_\_

Trainee

\_\_\_\_\_

Date

\_\_\_\_\_

Program Coordinator

\_\_\_\_\_

Date

**NANAIMO FAMILY LIFE ASSOCIATION  
VOLUNTEER COUNSELLING PROGRAM  
TRAINING APPLICATION**

**NAME:** \_\_\_\_\_

**ADDRESS:**  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**HOME TEL#** \_\_\_\_\_ **WORK TEL#** \_\_\_\_\_

**EMAIL ADDRESS** \_\_\_\_\_

**COUNSELLING LEVEL II COMPLETION DATE:** \_\_\_\_\_

**INSTRUCTOR'S NAME:** \_\_\_\_\_ **TEL#** \_\_\_\_\_

**PLEASE ATTACH THE FOLLOWING:**

1. Current Resume
2. Personal Statement Paper
3. The name, address, and phone number of a minimum 3 individuals (specify personal or professional) that we can contact regarding your strength as a potential Volunteer Counsellor. These must be recent and not family members.

## **PERSONAL STATEMENT PAPER**

The application process for becoming a Volunteer Counsellor in the Volunteer Counselling Program requires a paper defining your volunteer goals and addressing your past and present relevant experience. This paper is not expected to be University writing standard but it is an opportunity to **briefly** describe your beliefs and characteristics.

Your (3-5 page) paper must be typed and double spaced and include the following:

### **1. Personal Experience**

- Briefly describe 1 or 2 important life experience/challenge(s), which have contributed to your identity and to your view of the world.
- Briefly describe the extent to which you have worked through personal issues. What specific steps have you taken to work through these issues?
- Briefly describe your current unresolved issues.
- Briefly describe the role of support networks and community resources in your life.

### **2. Professional Experience**

- Briefly describe your past and current experiences working with people.
- Briefly describe your experience working with adults, youth, minorities, disabled, and disadvantaged persons.
- Briefly describe your experience in teamwork and consultation.

### **3. Counselling Goal Statement**

- State your reasons for wanting to complete the Volunteer Counselling Training.
- Briefly discuss your views regarding the most important current social issues. Describe their impact on your work with individuals.
- Briefly describe the qualities that counsellors should possess before entering counsellor training. To what extent do you possess these qualities? What are your strengths and areas of development?
- What are your learning goals in this training? What benefits do you hope to gain?

**NANAIMO FAMILY LIFE ASSOCIATION  
VOLUNTEER COUNSELLING PROGRAM**

**REFERENCE CHECK QUESTIONS**

(The following questions will be asked verbally by VCP staff to the 3 references provided by applicants. In addition to the 3 references, an instructor of the Counselling Level II course will also be contacted as an additional reference.)

**DATE:** \_\_\_\_\_

**FOR:** \_\_\_\_\_ **BY:** \_\_\_\_\_

**REFERENCE NAME:** \_\_\_\_\_

**RELATIONSHIP:** \_\_\_\_\_ **TIME KNOWN:** \_\_\_\_\_

1. Ability to establish and maintain boundaries.
2. Ability to demonstrate verbal and written communication skills.
3. Awareness of impact of personal assumptions, values, and beliefs on diversity.
4. Awareness of ethical practice.
5. Ability to manage time and work commitments.
6. Works within organizational policies and procedures.
7. Ability to take responsibility for
  - a) personal development
  - b) supervision
  - c) feedback
8. Ability to
  - a) identify and manage conflict
  - b) manage stress
9. Willingness to participate as a team member.
10. Ability to maintain cooperative relationships.

## **VOLUNTEER COUNSELLING PROGRAM**

### **TRAINEE CHECKLIST**

- ✓ **Attend the Volunteer Counselling Training Program Orientation**
- ✓ **Complete the Training Application, including a current resume, references and Personal Statement paper**
- ✓ **Attend the interview upon receipt of an invitation**
- ✓ **Complete the Training Commitment Agreement**
- ✓ **Complete a criminal Record Check and submit the receipt for reimbursement**
- ✓ **Once accepted into the training, pay \$150 fee**
- ✓ **Join NFLA for the exciting journey to become a Volunteer Counsellor!**