

## Volunteer Counselor Recruitment and Retention

### Community Engagement and Outreach:

*Consider the possibilities when recruiting crisis counselors (volunteers & interns):*

- Partner with local colleges and universities to recruit student volunteers
  - Attend career fairs and speak with campus groups to spread the word about your opportunities
  - Connect with administrators and faculty members to discuss speaking opportunities in classrooms to promote opportunities at your center
- Utilize your social media pages
  - Build awareness in the community by sharing stories and updates
  - Share what organizations and businesses can do to help by posting about your needs
- Build internship packages
  - Offer credit if possible –work with academic advising at a specific college to find out how
  - Master-level social work programs/schools require students to complete year-long internships as part of their curriculum –consider partnering with one of these programs
  - Incorporate other positions as internships such as Volunteer Coordinator or Receptionist
- Other spheres to reach out to:
  - City groups such as neighborhood associations, religious centers, community centers, rotary clubs, local libraries, and healthcare providers

### Volunteer Crisis Counselor Retention & Job Satisfaction:

*We know you don't always have the funds to pay every crisis counselor but you can offer support in many other ways. See what some of our centers have suggested to keep crisis counselor morale high.*

- Provide a friendly comfortable work environment
  - Address all crisis counselors by name, announce birthdays, start an encouragement bulletin board, utilize an open-door policy, and have an “idea box” for anonymous feedback
- Provide delicious snacks (such as hot chocolate, coffee, water, bulk products like goldfish crackers, granola bars, cookies, or cupcakes) for crisis counselors when they go on their breaks
  - Bonus: gathering around the goldfish allows crisis counselors to bond and get to know each other (even if it's only for a few minutes, it makes a difference)

- Allow crisis counselors to know and feel the impact they make
  - Start a crisis counselor of the month system: honor their commitment by posting a short interview and picture on the wall in a visible location
- Provide proper supervision and feedback with adequate time for debriefing and self-reflection. Why?
  - Self-care: it's easy to skip debriefing especially if you're short on time –however, debriefing after every shift offers space to discuss difficult calls and can prevent burnout
  - Learning: debriefing also offers a safe and judgment free space to discuss what was or wasn't effective in the last shift and allows crisis counselors to take care of their emotional health
- Include crisis counselors in screening and in training new crisis counselors
- Treat each crisis counselor as an individual: provide information about growth opportunities inside and outside the center, learn about them, and build relationships with them