

Frequently Asked Questions

What qualifications are needed to volunteer?

There is no single, specific set of skills or experience that qualify someone to volunteer with us. Our training is comprehensive and will provide the information you need; some of the characteristics that align well with our work are kindness, empathy, an ability to withhold judgment and opinions, and openness to feedback.

How is the training delivered?

The time commitment during training is slightly more than the ongoing requirement. First, there are 6 weeks of “classroom” training, where we meet on Monday and Thursday evenings from 6–9pm via Zoom. There is **additional** online work to be done at your own pace in between these meetings. It typically adds up to roughly 10–12 hours spent on training in these first 6 weeks, then evens out to one 4 hour shift per week afterwards.

How long does the training process take?

After completing the initial classroom training, you’ll be able to either come into the support center (if you’re volunteering in person) or spend a few more Zoom meetings learning about our phone system, documentation, and available supports. Next, you’ll spend about 8 hours total listening in on live contacts with a trainer. Finally, you’ll spend at least 16 hours taking contacts with a trainer listening to you until you’re ready to fly “solo”. If you consistently spend 4 hours per week, you can finish the live training and start answering contacts alone in about 2 months.

Does the training process really need to take that long?

That’s a fair question, and the answer is a resounding yes! We realize it’s a huge commitment and we don’t ask it lightly. The truth is, at the end of this long road are conversations with people who are in a wide variety of difficult circumstances – some being life-threatening. We want to make sure you’re as prepared as possible for anything that comes up and we’re willing to spend the time needed to do so.