

<b>TITLE:</b>	<b>Warm Line Volunteer</b>
<b>TIME COMMITMENT:</b>	<b>One 4-hour shift per week for at least 6 months (after 36-hour training)</b>

### **About the Mental Health Association of San Francisco (MHASF)**

MHASF is a mental health peer-run nonprofit located in downtown San Francisco and serving people and agencies across the Bay Area since 1947. As mental health consumers ourselves, we center the lived expertise of people with mental health challenges in our advocacy, education, and support programs, and believe that dignity and recovery in mental health are something everyone can experience. We're dedicated to creating spaces for learning and healing around stigmatized and under-resourced areas in mental health—hoarding and cluttering behavior, post-hospitalization peer support, community-based crisis response, tech-based peer support, and more.

### **About the Warm Line**

The Warm Line is a phone and instant messaging-based service that provides information, resources, and emotional support to the San Francisco Bay Area community. Our goal is to provide accessible, relevant, and nonjudgmental peer support to anyone who reaches out to us, regardless of how big or small the need. We believe that having readily-available access to support and human connection in the moment helps people avoid getting to a crisis point later. Since 2014, our Warm Line peer counselors have taken over 95,000 calls and chats from people of all walks of life.

### **Volunteering on the Warm Line**

Warm Line Volunteers are the core of our team, and our work wouldn't be possible without them! Volunteers are what make the Warm Line a warm and welcoming place. Volunteers are the ones who answer calls, chat with our instant messaging visitors, help people find information about mental health resources, and share their own lived experience of mental health challenges to build trust and hope. Our volunteers believe that peer-to-peer connections are powerful, and that everyone deserves to have the support they need to recover and thrive.

As a Warm Line volunteer, you will gain on-the-job experience in the mental health and nonprofit fields, build peer support skills through our extensive training program, learn more about other local resources and community-based organizations, and help our callers and chat visitors feel heard, understood, and supported by someone who has also been there. For volunteers who meet time commitment expectations, we're also happy to provide references and letters of recommendation.

### **Volunteer Key Responsibilities**

- Answer calls and instant messages
- Use our resource database to find helpful referrals
- Use active listening and peer counseling skills
- Share personal lived experience with callers
- Record information about calls and callers
- Collaborate with other volunteers and staff
- Respond to crisis situations according to Warm Line procedures
- Help keep the call center space clean and organized

### **Training**

All Warm Line volunteers complete extensive training:

- 36 hours of classroom training prior to taking calls
- At least 2 shadow shifts with a peer mentor prior to taking calls
- Ongoing peer mentorship and continuing education training

### **Key Skills & Abilities Needed**

- Personal, lived experience of mental health challenges and willingness to discuss these experiences with callers and chat visitors
- Love for talking with people and making connections
- Patience and a nonjudgmental approach to mental health and diversity
- Understanding of peer support and active listening
- Typing and computer skills, and ability to use a multi-line phone system
- Organization, focus, and attention to detail
- Experience with keeping confidentiality
- Calm in stressful situations
- Ability to de-escalate conflicts
- Commitment to MHAOSF's mission and values

### **Time Commitment**

Our callers and chat visitors trust that someone will be there when they contact the Warm Line. We depend on volunteers to be reliable, punctual, and dedicated to their work. Specifically, we ask volunteers to commit to:

- Volunteering with the Warm Line for at least **6 months**
- Working at least **one 4-hour shift per week**
- Attending periodic group meetings

(Volunteers who complete training and begin working but are unable to meet these expectations may be dismissed from the program.)

### **How to Apply**

Send us a completed **Warm Line Volunteer Application**. There are two ways you can do this:

- A. Use our convenient [online form](#).

**OR**

- B. Fill out the attached application form (starting on the next page), and send it to [warmlinevolunteer@mentalhealthsf.org](mailto:warmlinevolunteer@mentalhealthsf.org). Put your last name and "Warm Line Volunteer" in the subject line.

Incomplete applications may not be considered, so make sure to answer each of the application questions.

### **Selection Process**

Applicants who are selected to move forward will be asked to complete **an in-person interview** to help us get to know you and assess your potential fit. Our volunteers are selected based on their combination of experience, skills, knowledge and understanding of the role, and availability for shifts.

If you are chosen to become a Warm Line volunteer, you will be asked **to attend the next 36-hour training series**. Training series are usually scheduled to take place during daytime hours on Sundays and Thursdays for two consecutive weeks. Due to the nature of the position, volunteers must be able to attend **all** sessions of the training series. Those who have scheduling conflicts with the next scheduled training may be asked to wait until the following training series to join.

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Email:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Phone:** \_\_\_\_\_

**My gender pronouns are:**

- She/her/hers
- He/him/his
- They/them/theirs
- Ze/hir/hirs
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**Are you at least 18 years of age?**

- Yes
- No

**Volunteer Availability**

If you are selected to be a Warm Line Volunteer, which days and times could you be available for call center shifts? While we only ask for a commitment of one shift per week, we love volunteers who have some flexibility to work a variety of times. Available shift times are subject to change.

**Shifts I Could Work** (check all that apply):

	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Afternoon (1pm-5pm)							
Evening (5pm-9pm)							

**1. Why do you want to volunteer with the Warm Line?**

**2. What do you know about peer support and the recovery movement?**

**3. If you have completed a mental health peer specialist training or certification program, check which one(s) below:**

- RAMS Peer Specialist Mental Health Certificate Entry Course
- RAMS Peer Specialist Mental Health Certificate Advanced Course
- BestNow! Peer Specialist Training
- Community Action Marin Peer Counselor Training
- COPE (Co-Occurring Peer Education)
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**4. What experience do you have providing peer support or counseling to others?**

**5. What other training, skills, or strengths do you have that would make you a good fit for this role?**

**6. To what extent are you comfortable sharing your lived experience of mental health challenges and/or substance use with callers?**

**7. In your opinion, how does calling a warm line help people?**

**8. How might it affect you if you couldn't help a caller in the way you wish to help?**

**9. What traits in people have made it the most challenging for you to support them?**

**10. What parts of volunteering at the Warm Line might be challenging for you?**

**11. Volunteering at the Warm Line can be very stressful at times. What supports and tools do you have in your life to respond to stress?**

**12. Are you fluent in speaking any languages other than English? Check any that apply:**

- Cantonese
- Russian
- Spanish
- Tagalog
- Vietnamese
- Other(s): \_\_\_\_\_

**Please read the following and initial below to confirm your acknowledgment and understanding:**

- It is an eligibility requirement for volunteers to have personal, lived experience of mental health challenges and related experience and be ready to talk about those experiences with callers when appropriate.
- All volunteer applications are appreciated, but not everyone will be selected to interview or to become a Warm Line volunteer.
- Volunteers must complete the 36-hour Warm Line training before they can begin taking any calls.
- Volunteers are asked to commit to working at least one 4-hour shift a week for 6 months (about 96 hours), and repeated lateness, unavailability to work, or missed shifts may result in dismissal.
- Volunteers must meet other performance standards, and may be dismissed for performance reasons.
- Volunteers are required to sign a strict confidentiality agreement to protect sensitive caller, volunteer, and MHASF staff information. This means you will not be able to talk about calls or callers, volunteer or staff personal details, or other confidential information outside of MHASF.
- All Warm Line volunteer shifts take place on-site in the Warm Line call center; for quality assurance and to ensure you are fully supported we do not permit remote call-taking.
- By sending this application and initialing below, you affirm that all the information you have provided is true and accurate. False or misleading information in your application will be grounds for disqualification.

**Applicant Initials:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_