

POSITION: DIVERSION SPECIALIST 2

Scope: The role of the Diversion Specialist is to facilitate calls on the shelter diversion line to assist those who are within three days of losing housing, or experiencing homelessness, access safe alternatives to shelter. It includes answering incoming calls in a client-centered, trauma-informed, solution-focused manner and providing access to housing-focused strategies that reduce the likelihood the caller will need to become homeless. This position represents the YWCA and works in partnership with the Greater Richmond Continuum of Care (GRCoC), local service providers, government partners, and funders to provide a comprehensive regional approach that aligns seamlessly with the Coordinated Entry System.

ESSENTIAL DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES include the following. Other duties may be assigned as relevant to the shelter diversion program (*Essential functions may include, but are not limited to the functions listed below.*)

- Conducts initial screening of callers to assess appropriate service suggestions and facilitates setting appointments for referrals and/or services.
- Responds to client calls by assessing the level of danger for domestic and sexual violence, mental health, substance abuse, and homeless issues and offers referral resources.
- Ensures the collection of required service utilization, demographic, and outcome data.
- Builds strong, strategic relationships with community partners
- Participates on committees and attends meetings pertinent to the YWCA and GRCoC, Coordinated Entry and Diversion activities, as directed by the Diversion Specialist's supervisor.

QUALIFICATIONS: To perform this job successfully, an individual must be able to perform each essential duty satisfactorily. The requirements listed below are representative of the knowledge, skill, and/or ability required. Reasonable accommodations may be made to enable individuals with disabilities to perform the essential functions. Excellent verbal and written communication skills are required. Flexibility in work hours and computer knowledge are important.

EDUCATION and/or EXPERIENCE

Education:

- Minimum Associate's degree in a relevant social services field; or equivalent combination of education and experience.
- Experience in homeless services and/or domestic and sexual violence field preferred.
- Knowledge of community resources and referral networks, and the capacity to identify and develop relationships with new sources and services as they become available.
- Knowledge of computer and office equipment, Microsoft Word, Excel, and PowerPoint.

SKILLS & REQUIREMENTS:

- Must have outstanding communication skills: using appropriate language (verbal and written).
- Must be able to articulate and demonstrate a clear understanding of homelessness; dynamics and intervention.

- Ability to manage a crisis phone line while maintaining empathic listening and compassionate response skills.
- Ability to solve practical problems and deal with a variety of concrete variables in situations where only limited standardization exists; as well as provide effective response while in a demanding situation.
- Ability to maintain personal and professional boundaries as well as represent the interests of the YWCA, its staff and programs.
- Exemplifies excellence and ensures that performance reflects the philosophy of vision of the YWCA.
- Detail oriented & strong organizational skills, with the capacity to develop and manage systems that ensure accurate and timely follow-up as well as documentation.
- Knowledge of computer and office equipment, including Microsoft Office.
- Considerable knowledge of community resources and referral networks, and the capacity to identify and develop relationships with new sources and services as they become available.
- Successful completion of criminal background and credit checks.

This job description in no way states or implies that these are the only duties to be performed by the employee occupying this position. The incumbent is expected to perform other duties necessary for the effective operation of the department.

A successful Diversion Specialist will demonstrate characteristics as below:

- **They should be an extraordinary problem solver who is remarkably resourceful rather than whining about a lack of resources.** Being solution-focused means the individual will work the problem to find a solution rather than waiting for someone else to find a resource or fix a system that is broken.
- **They need to think before reacting to what is presented.** A good Diversion Specialist puts themselves on a short delay. The client says something. They take a pause, sometimes counting in their head, before responding. This avoids unnecessary conflict, feelings of interrogation, and the rapid exchange that can interfere with remaining objective.
- **They must remain objective and fair.** A good Diversion Specialist sees forests and trees. They see the needs of the household in front of them while also thinking of all households in similar circumstance. They see the household's needs for resources in the context of all resources available. They are not going to circumvent the process, nor are they going to make exceptions. They build trustworthiness through the transparency of what they do.
- **They must focus on the problem/issues, not the emotions.** The best Diversion Specialist must have compassion. But they need to separate the sometimes overwhelming emotional context that the household finds themselves in from the problems that led the household to seek service in the first place.
- **They must exercise direct communication and active listening.** No sugar coating or misleading referrals are found emanating from a good Diversion Specialist. They focus on facts rather than opinion or advice. They call it as it is after making sure they have understood the situation as presented.
- **They must focus on the future, not the past.** A good Specialist knows they cannot rewind life to prevent a particular situation or mishap from occurring. As such, they need to see exactly where things are at in the present to work with the household to prepare a course of action for the future. And when the household seems fixated on past events, they work hard to get them to focus not on "what happened" but instead on "what's next?"
- **They must have unwavering integrity of process and remain impartial to all parties that may be trying to influence the situation.** A good Diversion Specialist is supported by the system and established processes as a whole. There are no special favors for politicians or friends in other organizations or their pastor, etc. While others may try to advocate for particular favor for their household, the best Diversion Specialists ensure there are no side doors or special treatment.
- **They must have impeccable personal boundaries.** Whatever is happening in the life of the client, a good Diversion Specialist will know how to separate that professionally from their own life and experience so that emotions and resources on a personal level do not interfere in the process. The best Diversion Specialists practice empathy, not sympathy.
- **They must embrace and empower self-determination.** A good Diversion Specialist works with the household seeking assistance. They do not do things to the household nor do they do things for the household. A good Diversion Specialist knows how to transparently present options for consideration by the household and empowers that household to resolve their own situation to the best of their ability, progressively engaging only when the household has demonstrated an inability to effectively engage with the resources and options provided.
- **They must steadfastly distinguish between want and need.** A good Diversion Specialist uses the lightest touch possible after understanding the true needs of the household. This is critical given the household can approach services feeling a sense of entitlement, or wanting what their friends have received, or even getting what they were given in a previous encounter with the system. A good Diversion Specialist focuses on needs, not wants.