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**Volunteer Information Pack**

*Welcome!*

First and foremost thank you for your interest in volunteering with Rape Crisis Midwest. Before filling out a volunteer application form it is recommended that you fully read this information pack to familiarise yourself with the centre, the work we do and the voluntary roles available. The next few pages will contain some general information on the centre, what you can expect while volunteering with us and what we will expect form you. There will also be a section including some frequently asked questions, information on the different volunteering positions we have, testimonials form some of our great current volunteers and the volunteer application process.

**Contact us:**

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**Centre information and background**

*Our vision is of a society where all men, women and children are free from sexual violence.*

Rape Crisis Midwest was set up in 1980 with the aim of providing support services to survivors of rape, sexual assault and sexual abuse and to those supporting survivors.

Minister Jan O’Sullivan officially opened our new building, complete with new training facilities on Friday November 8th 2013.

Rape Crisis Midwest provides a free, confidential, non-judgemental crisis support and counselling service to any and all survivors of sexual violence, which includes people from all demographics, backgrounds, race, religion, age (over 16s), sexual orientation and gender etc. Rape Crisis Midwest does not discriminate against any person.

We provide the following services:

* Support
* Information
* Crisis counselling
* Long-term counselling
* Telephone counselling
* Court accompaniment
* Hospital/FME accompaniment (SATU)
* Confidential referral to other relevant services
* Group support
* Training and education programmes

We operate with a small number of paid staff members, the rest are volunteers.

There are a number of departments within the center including:

* Crisis intervention
* Counselling
* Education and awareness
* Fundraising

**What you can expect while volunteering with us**

We welcome people from all walks of life to come and volunteer for us as their varied experiences and backgrounds can help us in a number of positive ways. Volunteers are needed to help out with a wide range of services and activities so there is always something to do! We are always open to the ideas and opinions of others on how to improve the centre and the services we provide.

The continuation of Rape Crisis Midwest depends largely on public generosity and our wonderful volunteers. We try to keep all volunteers as connected as possible – you can expect to receive our quarterly newsletter, regular bulletins and emails on centre goings-on, events and various training days you can avail of. We also try to have regular meetings for person-to-person contact. You will be assigned a ‘go-to’ person depending on the area you are matched with and there is also a volunteer coordinator to answer any questions you may have if and when they arise.

If you are interested in helping out your local community and making a difference or if you want to learn new skills and meet new people then a voluntary role at Rape Crisis Midwest could be for you! You will quickly become part of a friendly and motivated team. There are a number of different levels in which you can get involved in but no matter what work you do with us you will meet some great people and have a worthwhile experience.

If your application is successful you will be welcomed to the team immediately! Depending on the area you are volunteering in, you could be called upon to lend a hand straight away or have to wait a short period of time for an up-coming event or course.

If it is a case that your application is unsuccessful Rape Crisis Midwest will alert you of this as soon as possible along with giving you a reasonable explanation.

**What we expect from you**

Rape Crisis Midwest’s volunteers provide crucial services to our clients, their supporters, schools and the local community.

The following are some general requirements for becoming a volunteer:

* Fill out an application form and attend an interview
* You must commit at least six months of your time to us
* Complete a Garda vetting check
* You must show dependability and sensitivity and have a desire to help people
* You must be non-judgemental and treat information you may come across in the strictest of confidence\*
* Complete all required training (this varies depending on each position)
* Attend meetings and events regularly
* Share the ethos of Rape Crisis Midwest
* Counselling volunteers must be 25 years of age or older

\*Rape Crisis Midwest understands that due to new legislation (Childfirst) not all information may be kept in the strictest of confidence. However, any information outside of this must remain confidential in order to gain and keep the trust of our clients.

**Frequently asked questions**

***Do I need to have any special training or skills to volunteer?***

No. Appropriate training will be given to you depending on the area you are volunteering for. However, if you do have training or a skill you think could be beneficial for volunteering here please let us know! All we would ask is that you are non-judgemental and hold the necessary attributes to work in such a sensitive area: patience, sensitivity, maturity, dependability, etc.

***How much of my free time do I have to give up?***

This all depends on the area in which you are volunteering for. Some training can take one day others can take longer. SATU workers are expected to be ‘on call’ 1-3 days a month or you may be asked to give a night or two a week to attend meetings on the run up to certain events. You will be able to discuss all of this at the interview stage. We will try to work with you and around your schedule to insure the best outcome for both you and the centre. We would ask that you would give us a minimum of 6 months of your time.

***Does volunteering involve any costs?***

The majority of training provided at the centre is free. The centre will reimburse reasonable out-of-pocket expenses provided receipts are shown and expenses are kept to a minimum. This can be discussed further at the interview stage.

***Could I just volunteer for a once-off event?***

Yes, depending on the event and the nature of your voluntary role. However, this would need to be discussed fully with event coordinators beforehand.

***Could I volunteer for two weeks work experience in the centre?***

No. Unfortunately this is not possible due to the limited staff members we would not be able to give appropriate time or supervision.

***Are you taking on any paid staff or interns?***

At the moment we are not taking on any new staff or interns.

***Is there anything else I need to know?***

By fully reading this information pack at this point there is nothing else you need to know. If a question or issue has arisen that you are unsure about please contact our volunteer coordinator.

***How do I apply?***

If you wish to lend a hand to a once-off event get in contact with us as soon as possible to discuss this with the event coordinator. You must still fill out an application form but stress it is a once-off event.

If you wish to volunteer on a long-term basis simply fill out the application form and send it in to us and we will be in contact with you as soon as we can.

We also hold volunteer open days at our centre 4 times a year (which will be advertised via our website, social media and newsletter), here you can meet with some of the staff, find out more about the centre and voluntary roles, ask any questions you may have, fill out an application form there and then and have some tea and biscuits!

**Different voluntary positions available**

**SATU (Psychological support worker)**

SATU stands for sexual assault treatment unit. The role of a SATU worker is to attend an FME (forensic medical examination) at University Hospital Limerick with a client who has been raped or sexually assaulted. The purpose of the SATU worker is to give the survivor the support they need and answering any questions they have while going through the examination. Full training is given. Training courses are run several times a year and are typically 8 days spaced out to once a week or once a month depending on the time of year they start, Garda vetting is also required. You will be shown exactly where to go in the hospital and once the training is completed you will be put on the SATU Rota. It is usually 2 nights a month but it can sometimes vary from 1 to 3. The SATU service operates from 7PM-7AM Monday to Thursday and from 7PM Friday all through the weekend until 7AM Monday morning. Training for SATU is free of charge. There are also regular SATU volunteer support meetings held in the centre.

**Court accompaniment**

If a client has to attend court regarding their rape or sexual assault they are offered someone to accompany them to the court for support if the wish. The training typically happens in a courthouse and the locations and training times/days vary. There is usually only a 1-day training course which takes place a few times a year. Training for court accompaniment is free of charge. Travel costs are subsidised.

**SAYIT** (Educational programme)

The SAYIT (formally SPACE) programme is relatively new to Rape Crisis Midwest so we are still ‘working out the kinks’. This ½ day interactive presentation is given to the transition year students of a few secondary schools in the area. As the programme grows, we hope that the number of schools involved will also grow. The training for this programme consists of 1 – 2 days where you will be shown the SAYIT presentation and given a specific role for when it is being administered to the children. You will also be required to attend 2 or 3 of the school presentations per school year. The first one you attend you will just be watching to see how it is done. Training for SAYIT is free of charge.

**Counselling**

To become a volunteer counsellor with Rape Crisis Midwest you must complete our counselling course. It is an intensive but enjoyable course, where you will meet some wonderful and likeminded new friends. There is a cost for this course. You are also required to attend a number of hours of personal development (see a counsellor yourself). Rape Crisis Midwest is unable to pay for or provide this personal development. Once you complete the course you will provide free counselling to clients of Rape Crisis Midwest and are asked to do this for a minimum of 2 years. This course is under review at the moment so details are subject to change. However, you can put your name on the waiting list and we will contact you before a new course begins with full details. You will be required to attend a separate interview with the course facilitators before you will be considered.

**Fundraising/Collections**

We are always looking for volunteers who can raise funds for the centre. Whether it be getting involved in a flag day, bag packing or church gate collection. We hold collections like this regularly throughout the year (as fundraising is vital to keep the centre open) in various areas across Limerick, Clare and Tipperary. There is no training required for this, just honesty, patience and warm clothes! Rape Crisis Midwest goes through all appropriate channels before any collection goes ahead.

***Additionally, if you are holding or would like to hold a fundraising event and make Rape Crisis Midwest a beneficiary please don’t hesitate to get in contact with us.***

**Events**

Rape Crisis Midwest holds a number of different fundraising events every year. The volunteers needed for this would vary depending on their skills, profession and connections. For any event we would need volunteers to do a variety of things such as: take money on the door, sell tickets, help us advertise the event, organise the actual event, and decorate the venue. These are to name but a few! Our big annual event is our Ultimate Quiz Night held in Thomand Park, this year we will need a lot of volunteers in the hope of making it even bigger and better than last year.

***If you think you have what it takes to volunteer in one or more of these areas we would be glad to get you on board!***

**Testimonials from some of our current volunteers:**

**Fundraising and Events Volunteering:**

*‘Volunteering for Rape Crisis Midwest is an incredibly fulfilling experience as they provide a vital support service for my local community. It has give me the opportunity to work with kind and passionate people as well as to learn and develop new skills.’* – Lorna

**SATU:**

*‘I have been volunteering with the SATU unit for about 3 years now. To be with someone in a time of crisis, and know you make such a difference, is incredibly rewarding. The training we received was fantastic - I learned so much in such a short time, not only about sexual crimes and the work of the Centre, but also about myself. I have met some fantastic people through my volunteer work, and really value both their friendship and support, and also the continued support of the centre.’* - Jayne

**Court Accompaniment:**

*‘I have been involved with Rape Crisis Midwest since 2011, and one of the most beneficial parts of this involvement for me was the opportunity to attend the RCNI court accompaniment training. Court accompaniment is an experience which can seem daunting at first but the full-day training we received was more than enough to assuage any concerns and answer any questions we had. Every aspect of court accompaniment was covered in an understandable, accessible manner, from familiarisation with the court environment (the training even took place in a courtroom at the Central Criminal Court!) and legal procedures, right down to how best to support a survivor in the presence of their perpetrator. In my opinion, this training is a valuable tool in dealing with Rape Crisis Midwest's clients in any respect - even if you never actually accompany someone to a hearing.’ -* Hazel

**Volunteer application process**

If you have read through the different voluntary positions available at Rape Crisis Midwest and would like to apply for one of them just fill out the application form and send it back to us via post or email.

In the application form you will be asked:

* For your personal details
* What area you would like to volunteer for (even if it is a once-off event)
* What you could bring to the centre
* Why you want to volunteer
* If you have a criminal record and if you are willing to go through Garda vetting
* To give the details of two people who will act as a reference for you

The reason we ask these questions is to make sure us as an organisation and you as a volunteer will be the right fit. It is also to see where you could be best utilized within the centre.

Once we receive your application form someone will be in touch with you as soon as possible to set up an interview. After the interview you will be told within a reasonable amount of time if your application was successful or not. If it is successful you will be put in touch with the necessary coordinators and go from there.

***Once again thank you for your interest.***

***We sincerely hope you enjoy your time volunteering for Rape Crisis Midwest.***