

Niagara Victim Crisis Support Service Overview

Niagara Victim Crisis Support Service is a community-based service that assists Police, Emergency Medical Services (“EMS”) Fire and hospitals in providing short-term emotional support and practical assistance to victims of crime and/or disaster. In accordance to the Ministry of the Attorney General minimal standards training, community volunteers are *specially trained* to provide for the victim’s immediate needs as well as provide appropriate referrals to community agencies for longer-term needs.

Crisis assistance is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week to all Police Services in the Niagara Region (Niagara Regional Police, Ontario Provincial Police and the Niagara Parks Police) as well as the Hospitals, Emergency Medical Service (EMS) and Fire Services. On consent of the victim, the attending police, fire and/or hospital emergency staff can request victim assistance to render emotional support or practical assistance. The person(s) assisted may be victims of any crime, including: domestic violence, sexual assault, robbery, break and enter, theft, homicide, suicide, sudden death, motor vehicle collisions and/or fatalities.

In addition to emotional support, volunteers may provide transportation to other services, help clean up, make phone calls and/or other arrangements upon the victim’s consent. If the victim is identified as having longer-term needs, the volunteers will provide information and referral options for further assistance.

The objective of victim services is to lessen the trauma of being victimized, help the victim cope with the impact of crime and/or tragedy and to encourage the victim to connect with other services to provide counseling, financial assistance, housing, compensation, and medical or legal services, as appropriate. As well, it allows the Police, EMS and Fire personnel to be available sooner to attend to other crisis and provides the community a way to become more involved in dealing with the effects of crime and in mobilizing crime prevention efforts in their area.

Service Description

- The service began in West Niagara on March 1, 1997 and was known at the time as Niagara Victim Crisis And Referral Service (Niagara VCARS).
- Service expanded to cover the entire Niagara Region on April 1, 1998 and was approved for provincial funding on August 1st known as the current Niagara Victim Crisis Support Service (NVCSS).
- The Niagara Regional Police Services, Ontario Provincial Police, Niagara Parks Police, Emergency Medical Service, Fire Services and hospitals are served by NVCSS.
- The service is community based and volunteer driven.
- We have approximately 80 volunteers available – each carries a pager.
- Service is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.
- Provides service to person's 16 years of age or older.
- Our objective is to respond within 30 minutes.
- Volunteers always respond in teams of two.
- Volunteers are specially trained to respond and provide:
 - ◆ Emotional Support
 - ◆ Practical Assistance
 - Calling next of kin
 - Tidying up after a spousal assault/break and enter
 - Transportation to emergency services
 - ◆ Death Notification
 - Accompany Police Officer to deliver death notifications
 - ◆ Referrals to Community Agencies

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VOLUNTEER POSITION DESCRIPTION

Position Requirements:

- mature and responsible individual, twenty-one (21) years of age and older
- good communication skills, interpersonal, and problem solving skills
- ability or experience to deal with crisis situations
- must be willing to attend an interview with NVCSS staff and delegates, submit personal references and submit to a Canadian Police Information Centre (police check) provided by NVCSS.
- personal suitability to provide sensitive, emotionally safe and effective service to victims on behalf of NVCSS
- knowledge of community resources
- knowledge of law, as pertaining to victims
- ability to maintain strict confidentiality of all issues surrounding calls for service to victims, information shared in volunteer training session and information the organization
- Valid driver's license and access to a reliable vehicle
- willing to complete minimum training standards and ongoing meetings/training development
- must not have received services from NVCSS during the previous twelve(12) month period
- Following completion of training, a minimum of one year volunteer commitment

Position Summary:

After successful completion of a standardized minimum 40 hour volunteer training, passing the examination requirements, swearing on oath of confidentiality and an orientation, potential volunteers may be qualified as a victim service provider with Niagara Victim Crisis Support Service.

Volunteers always work as part of a crisis team and respond immediately to requests from emergency services to provide short-term emotional support and practical assistance to victims of crime, tragic circumstance or disaster. The volunteer will ensure that appropriate options and/or referrals for longer-term assistance are provided to the victim.

As the program develops, experienced and qualified volunteers may take on responsibility as "Team Leader."

Volunteers may also be involved in recruiting, interviewing, training, maintaining resource directory, developing and distributing public relations material, public speaking, assisting in office administration, organizing social events, newsletter, workshops, recognition events.

Direct Service Responsibilities:

- Respond immediately to requests for victim assistance from emergency services by attending onsite or at an alternate safe location. On occasion, crisis assistance may be done by telephone.
- Provide emotional support and companionship, including answering questions and providing information that will help to lessen the impact of the crisis for the victim.
- Provide practical assistance as needed. This may include transportation and/or accompanying victim to emergency services, (e.g., a shelter or hospital, making phone calls, securing premises, etc.).
- Identify longer-term needs by responding to victims concerns and supply the victim with appropriate options and referrals to services in the community that will assist them in accessing resources for further assistance.
- Report activity to NVCSS Volunteer Coordinator, Client Service Coordinator, Team Leader (or designate) upon arrival, during the call and upon completion of call.
- Complete client contact report form and submit it to the office within 24 hours.
- Participate in the evaluation of the call and provide relevant information to the NVCSS Volunteer Coordinator, Client Service Coordinator or Team Leaders.

Other Duties and Responsibilities:

- Participate in a minimum of six(6) meeting or training opportunities a year (September to June) after completion of one(1) year of service to maintain accreditation.
- Report back to NVCSS Volunteer Coordinator, Client Service Coordinator, Team Leader (or designate) if a victim assistance call or assignment is particularly stressful for the attending volunteer(s). Individual attention or debriefing will be available to assist the volunteer(s) in coping.
- Bring to the attention of the NVCSS Volunteer Coordinator, Client Service Coordinator, Team Leader (or designate) any inappropriate volunteer behaviour or victim complaint that could adversely affect the NVCSS program.
- Ensure pagers are in good working order.
- Complete expense statement for mileage and out-of-pocket expenses

TIME COMMITMENT

Every NVCSS Volunteer must fulfil the following minimum time commitment:

- 40-hour accreditation training program is mandatory for direct service on-call volunteers
- Two 12-hour on-call shifts a month
- Minimum six (6) meeting/training opportunities a year to maintain accreditation
- A minimum one year commitment