



Job Description

Shelter Program Assistant

Position Title: SHELTER PROGRAM ASSISTANT
Reports to: Shelter Supervisor
Job Location: WISH Offices (Vancouver BC)

JOB SUMMARY

The Shelter Program Assistant facilitates the safe and healthy functioning of the WISH Shelter centre by building relationships with participants, maintaining the cleanliness of the space, and delivering basic needs and services to participants. The Shelter is a low barrier space for women (trans inclusive) who are street-based sex workers, therefore the Program Assistant will work as a team to support the women within a trauma informed, harm reductive, participant centred approach. The Program Assistant represents the guiding principles of WISH by ensuring that each participant is treated with acceptance, caring, dignity and respect, in a non-judgemental manner.

ABOUT WISH

Based in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside, WISH is the largest sex worker support organization in Canada. For more than thirty-five years, WISH has offered a safe place of respite for women involved in street-based sex work. WISH Drop-in Centre Society is an organization and space for women and people of marginalized genders, including Two-Spirit, trans, and non-binary. For more information about WISH and our programs and services, visit our website: <https://wish-vancouver.net/>.

During the unprecedented two+ years of the pandemic, WISH was required to quickly pivot and implement new programs and services to fill critical sanitation and overdose prevention gaps left by neighbouring community changes and closures, subsequently experiencing considerable growth in a relatively short time. As a result, we embarked on an organizational "reset" to reprioritize the needs of street-based sex workers through restructured programming and services. Additionally, we completed a full-scale Organizational Development Review, designed to evaluate our workplace culture, identify opportunities to improve our work and staff supports, and implement actionable changes to strengthen our service delivery.

As we continue to transition from our temporary emergency response, with now more than 200 staff, 100+ volunteers and a growing number of programs and services, we are seeking the additional support and guidance of an experienced Development Manager.

DUTIES & RESPONSIBILITIES

- Providing basic needs services and support to up to 20 shelter participants who are street-based sex

workers to ensure their access to safe shelter, food, showers, first aid supplies, harm reduction supplies, clothing/toiletries/makeup donations and other WISH programming. Provide participants with referrals to services and supports outside of WISH.

- Working as a team player with shift mates to make collective decisions (including ban recommendations), for the benefit and safety of participants, coworkers, and volunteers in the space.
- Ensuring equal access to Shelter services and resources to all participants in a non-judgmental, non-preferential way.
- Responding to critical incidents with a trauma-informed lens by implementing immediate crisis intervention techniques in attempts to deescalate participants from anxious or otherwise triggered emotional states; other emotional supports; and/or medical or legal referrals as needed.
- Providing emotional support to participants who have experienced a 'bad date' through active listening, debriefing, validating participants' emotions, and assisting with Bad Date Reports.
- Assisting with food delivery as needed.
- Performing necessary domestic duties (i.e. dishes, laundry, cleaning, sweeping, and mopping etc.) to the extent that it is required throughout all shifts.
- Conducting participant intake to ensure participants fit the WISH mandate and work one-on-one with participants to determine their needs.
- Maintaining and providing daily statistics and reports regarding service delivery as required, including obtaining and recording demographic information of participants.
- Providing immediate crisis response and intervention as necessary to support participants in feeling safe and capable in making their own choices.
- Supporting participants' interests and rights by referring participants to legal aid, medical resources and policing professionals and other relevant programs and resources.
- Working one-on-one to assess participants' need for other services and provides them with information on helping organizations and professionals such as community service agencies, counsellors, legal aid lawyers, physicians and mental health services. Recommends appropriate services to participants.
- Providing information and support on safety and violence prevention to participants to empower women to make safe and healthy choices for themselves.
- Providing job shadowing for new staff, as well as training and mentoring of volunteers. Modeling of appropriate behaviours as well as the mission, vision, and core values of WISH.
- Accepting physical donations from community members, interacting with them positively, and transferring the donations into the storage areas.
- Performing first aid treatment as required.
- Providing overdose prevention and response, and responding to critical incidents in order to maintain the safety of all staff, participants, and volunteers in the space.
- Providing appropriate advocacy and support to the women by supplying information and referrals.
- Maintaining positive and constructive working relationships with coworkers through teamwork, collaboration, and debriefing.
- Actively participating in staff meetings and communicating with Shelter leadership in a constructive way to best support participants and maintain the safety of the space.
- Maintaining updated knowledge of relevant DTES and broader Vancouver resources, services, and service providers, as well as current knowledge of sex work legislation and policy issues.
- Consulting and liaising with community service agencies to maintain up-to-date information on available resources and maintain community relations.
- Other related duties as required.

QUALIFICATIONS & SKILLS

Education and Knowledge

- Certificate in a related human / social service field.
- Possess an understanding of the needs and challenges of women involved in street level sex work in Vancouver.
- Knowledge and understanding of Indigenous peoples and the legacy of colonization, the Residential school system, the 60's Scoop, and lasting cyclical trauma.
- Knowledge of the Downtown Eastside community and its services as well as issues in Sex Work legislation and policy.
- Knowledge of gender diversity and trans-inclusivity.

Training and Experience

- 1 year working in front line social services in the Downtown Eastside or similar community.
- Or an equivalent combination of education, training, experience, and lived experience.

Additional Requirement

- Maintain a commitment to providing a healthy and safe space for women (trans inclusive) in the street-based sex industry.
- Maintain healthy workplace boundaries.
- Be able to stand for extended periods of time, carry out cleaning duties, and safely carry up to 20lbs when required while transporting supplies and/or donations.
- Possess a demonstrated ability to support vulnerable women compassionately and non-judgmentally while maintaining strong personal boundaries.
- Possess strong collaboration and empathetic communication skills.
- Ability to respond to emergencies and proven experience in crisis de-escalation techniques.
- Hard-worker, self-starter and able to work as part of a team.