

**DEPARTMENT:** MENTAL HEALTH  
**CLASSIFICATION:** COMPETITIVE  
**APPROVED:** MARCH 18, 2025

**CRISIS COUNSELOR I**

**DISTINGUISHING FEATURES OF THE CLASS:** The work involves responding to and managing calls to the Crisis Services Call Center including local crisis and 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline. Callers may include, but are not limited to, persons with situational, personal, family disturbances, drug or alcohol problems, etc. Incumbents engage with callers, screen, and assess for immediate needs using the crisis intervention model and suicide assessment procedures and ensure that pertinent data is collected and maintained in the electronic health record system. Employees provide supportive counseling, brief education and coping skills, safety planning, and link callers to needed resources. The work is performed in accordance with all regulatory and departmental requirements under the general supervision of professional staff assigned to the Call Center. Does related work as required.

**TYPICAL WORK ACTIVITIES:**

1. Answers the 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline and local Crisis Services calls, often managing two (2) or more calls simultaneously which requires that calls be quickly assessed and triaged;
2. Engages with callers, conducts immediate needs assessment, triage and crisis intervention in accordance with the Crisis Intervention Model and Suicide Assessment procedures;
3. Utilizes risk assessment tools, including the Columbia Suicide Severity Rating scale, to determine risk level and interventions necessary;
4. Provides education, coping skill training, safety planning, and other brief interventions to de-escalate and resolve crisis situations;
5. Refers individuals to community services appropriate to their needs such as social services, housing, psychiatric, medical, legal, etc;
6. Links callers to the Mobile Crisis Team and/or other emergency first responders when determined necessary;
7. Assists with the activation and coordination of the Mobile Response Team under the direction of the Director of Community Services (DCS) Mental Health designee. Gathers initial case information and relays such to the DCS Designee during phone crisis emergencies and carries out the directions of the designee, such as arranging for an ambulance, police, and/or phoning to initiate Mobile Crisis Response Team;
8. Conducts follow-up to crisis and emergency calls, including to clients to ensure effective safety planning and linkage to resources; hospitals for disposition information; community supports and services to ensure effective linkage;
9. Completes required case documentation in the electronic health record system;
10. Maintains required statistical data in the phone logs, mobile crisis logs, etc;
11. Gathers relevant information to maintain crisis intervention records and to ensure confidentiality in accordance with the Mental Hygiene Law;
12. Retrieves caller information from the database to relay to the Supervising Social Worker or designee;
13. Completes shift reports, both verbally and in writing to convey critical information to other staff and supervisors;
14. Completes all required basic and on-going skills trainings;
15. Provides emergency shift coverage to avoid call center being unstaffed;
16. Assists Crisis Services volunteers by providing information and suggestions as needed and reports all concerns to the Supervising Social Worker or Director of Community Services Mental Health designee.

**FULL PERFORMANCE KNOWLEDGES, SKILLS, ABILITIES AND PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS:**

Good knowledge of crisis services policies and procedures; good knowledge of the service delivery of both public and private systems available to provide assistance to the various types of calls; good knowledge of needs, suicide, and risk assessment tools; good listening and interpersonal skills; strong documentation skills to capture and record key required data and information; ability to input and retrieve data from a database at an acceptable rate of speed and accuracy; ability to follow verbal and written directions; ability to multi-task and prioritize; ability to demonstrate empathy and patience with regard to callers' problems and needs; highly organized, sincerity; sound judgment and flexibility; tact; courtesy; willingness to work varying shifts and weekends; physical condition commensurate with the demands of the position.

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### **MINIMUM QUALIFICATIONS:**

**PROMOTIONAL QUALIFICATIONS:** Candidates must have two (2) years of permanent status as a Crisis Services Phone Aide in the Niagara County Mental Health Department immediately preceding date of exam.

**OPEN COMPETITIVE QUALIFICATIONS:** Candidates must meet one of the following

1. Graduation with a Bachelors Degree in a Human Services/Social Sciences field; **OR**
2. Graduation with an Associate's Degree or completion of at least sixty (60) credit hours **and** one of the following:
  - a. Two (2) years of experience in a paid or active volunteer emergency services position (i.e. 911 service, medical or psychiatric emergency or inpatient unit, or crisis telephone program); **OR**
  - b. Two (2) years of employment in a mental health or human services setting performing direct services to individuals (i.e. case/care manager, youth or crisis counselor, nursing assistant, direct service professional, peer specialist).

### **NOTE:**

1. Degrees must have been awarded by a college or university accredited by a regional, national, or specialized agency recognized as an accrediting agency by the U.S. Department of Education/U.S. Secretary of Education.
2. Verifiable volunteer and/or part-time experience will be pro-rated.