

Reports to Drop-In Shelter Manager

Shelter Support Specialist – DIS

SUMMARY OF PRIMARY FUNCTION

Under the oversight of the Shelter Manager, a Shelter Support Specialist provides judgement-free support to individuals seeking services at the Drop-In Shelter and plays a key role in meeting the needs of guests experiencing crises. Shelter Support Specialists use de-escalation strategies and a trauma-informed approach to problem-solve individual and interpersonal struggles with guests, and work with guests exhibiting difficult behaviors due to substances, mental health, or other factors to successfully stay in shelter.

ESSENTIAL RESPONSIBILITIES/DUTIES

1. Create a welcoming environment for new and returning guests, including greeting guests as they enter, orienting new guests to the shelter, and answering questions.
2. Work effectively as a member of the shelter team, including maintaining open lines of communication, consulting about guest needs or situations, cooperating to complete tasks, and engaging in shared decision-making, as appropriate.
3. Treat guests with respect and professionalism by practicing active listening, preserving guest confidentiality, avoiding power struggles, and maintaining patience in difficult situations.
4. Collaborate with the Shelter Manager, Shelter Case Managers, and Shelter Assistants to identify guests who may need additional support and to strategize about specific guest situations.
5. Proactively outreach to guests who are distressed or engaging in difficult behaviors and identify strategies to support these guests.
6. Engage empathetically with individuals who present for services but cannot access shelter for some reason (e.g. ineligible due to age or gender, current suspension, capacity, etc.).
7. Communicate shelter rules and policies; set limits with guests as appropriate, in keeping with a low-barrier shelter model.
8. Identify and intervene productively in emergency situations, including medical emergencies, mental health crises, and interpersonal conflicts.
9. Work individually and as a member of the shelter team to engage in effective de-escalation; take a leadership role in deescalating critical situations, as appropriate.
10. Provide support and assistance to individuals experiencing crises due to mental illness and/or substance use, including making referrals to other services, as appropriate.
11. Monitor shelter area(s) dedicated to intoxicated and/or symptomatic individuals, if applicable.
12. Engage in proactive and creative problem solving to maintain a safe environment and keep people inside (able to continue accessing shelter).

13. Engage in ongoing training, coaching, and education related to de-escalation, substance use, mental health symptoms, and other professional skills (provided by Porchlight). Complete certifications as required.
14. Maintain thorough and timely documentation of incidents, guest situations, and services provided, in keeping with program guidelines.
15. Attend and participate productively in weekly team meetings.
16. Maintain appropriate professional boundaries with guests, including refraining from engaging in social relationships or exchanging money/goods with guests. Report preexisting relationships that may cause a conflict of interest to the Shelter Manager and Case Management Supervisor.
17. Sweep, mop, wipe surfaces, take out trash, and perform other cleaning tasks as required to maintain a safe and sanitary environment. Use personal protective equipment (PPE) and follow appropriate protocols when cleaning bodily fluids.
18. Perform other duties as assigned.

Teamwork & Collaboration

1. Work in collaboration with program and all other agency staff to facilitate a team environment.
2. Demonstrate and model effective communication skills in building relationships with all guests and employees.
3. Create good working relationships with other service providers.
4. Participate in the development and implementation of Porchlight's strategic plan.

Porchlight Values & Culture

1. Treat all guests, employees, and visitors with caring, kindness, respect, and dignity.
2. Strive to reduce barriers to housing, shelter, and services.
3. Help to create an environment that values diversity and promotes racial equity.
4. Adhere to all Porchlight policies, procedures, code of conduct, and attendance rules.
5. Maintain strict confidentiality of all information.
6. Adhere to Porchlight policies in the use of computer technology and tele-communication devices.
7. Conduct oneself in accordance with appropriate and expected professional boundaries and policies.

QUALIFICATIONS

1. Genuine desire to work with people experiencing homelessness, including those with mental illness and/or chemical dependency (experience working with these populations preferred).
2. Ability to communicate and work effectively with staff and guests from various backgrounds.
3. Ability and willingness to work effectively and professionally with guests displaying a wide range of challenging, unpleasant, and/or unusual behavior.
4. Basic word processing skills and computer literacy skills.
5. Willingness to work on site in an environment with numerous other individuals and to wear personal protective equipment (provided).
6. Belief that shelter is a human right and that allowing individuals to access emergency shelter when they need it should be a top priority.

7. Knowledge of local resources for people seeking AODA treatment, mental health support, housing, public benefits and/or similar services, preferred.
8. Training in areas such as harm reduction, nonviolent communication, trauma-informed care, motivational interviewing, mental health first aid, and crisis intervention, preferred.

PHYSICAL DEMANDS & WORK ENVIRONMENT

The following physical demands are representative of those required by an employee to successfully perform the essential functions of this position. Reasonable accommodations may be available to enable individuals with disabilities to perform the essential functions.

Function	24% or less	25% - 49%	50% - 74%	75% or more
Indoor environment: open office, shelter dormitories, facilities, etc.				X
Outdoor environment: parking lot, grounds, on-site trailer, etc.	X			
Exposure to weather, extreme heat/cold, loud noises, fumes, airborne particles, toxic/caustic chemicals, risk of electrical shock and vibration	X			
Sitting		X		
Standing, kneeling, walking			X	
Bending, stooping	X			
Reaching, pushing, pulling	X			
Climbing stairs	X			
Lifting, carrying up to 15 pounds	X			
Repetitive, fine hand, finger, and foot movements		X		
Typing/data entry		X		
Operating various equipment	X			
Talking, hearing, interacting with coworkers, vendors, participants				X
Using office machines - phone, fax, computers, postage meter, etc.			X	
Close vision				X
Distance vision, field of vision, color/depth perception			X	

Minimum Requirements
Seeing, hearing, speaking
Reading, writing
Basic English comprehension, written and oral communication
Ability to lift 25+ pounds
Availability to work evenings, weekends, holidays