



FriendLine Volunteering
Frequently Asked Questions

Contents

What training is provided? 2

How long do calls last on FriendLine?..... 2

What does an average shift look like? 2

Can I volunteer from home?..... 2

Do you have many crisis/ difficult calls?..... 2

What skills or qualifications do I need to volunteer on FriendLine? 2

How long are the shifts? 3

When do shifts take place?..... 3

How many calls will I take per shift? 3

Can I do extra hours if I want to? 3

What are the callers like? 3

What sort of things do I talk about on FriendLine? 3

Can I use volunteering on FriendLine towards my placement hours? 3

Is Friends for Good registered to take Centrelink volunteers?..... 3

What sort of support is offered? 4

I already have a Police check; can I submit that?..... 4

Who can be a referee? Is it ok to have my family or friends?..... 4

I'm not sure how long I can commit to volunteering, is it ok to start anyway?..... 4

What training is provided?

All FriendLine volunteers must complete mandatory e-learning modules which include OH & S, Privacy and Confidentiality and Recognising and Responding to Elder Abuse. There is also a group training session that volunteers must attend, this covers information about Friends for Good, the FriendLine service, handling calls and everything a volunteer needs to know to take calls on FriendLine. Friends for Good also offers ongoing quarterly training addressing a variety of topics such as suicide awareness and working with culturally and linguistically diverse communities.

How long do calls last on FriendLine?

Calls are approximately 20 minutes in duration, some calls (especially with new callers) can be slightly longer, but this is the most common call duration.

What does an average shift look like?

On FriendLine an average shift involves coming into the office and checking in with your supervisors. You will then clock on to the volunteer database system to track your hours and check the phone system is ready to go. Once your shift time starts, you will answer calls as they come in and have a friendly chat with our callers. For new callers you will complete some basic data collection. At the end of your shift, you will have a chance to debrief with your supervisor and ask questions. You may also choose to attend a group debriefing session.

Can I volunteer from home?

No. Our program is set up for volunteers to attend shifts in the office. This allows us to manage risk and provide support for all of our volunteers. The only exception to this is during COVID-19 where volunteers may need to work from home to adhere to local restrictions.

Do you have many crisis/ difficult calls?

Most of the calls on FriendLine involve a friendly chat. Our advertising is quite clear that we are not a crisis service, and most people are aware of the purpose of our service. We do have people call occasionally who may be facing a difficult time or are in crisis. Dealing with these calls will be covered in training and there is always a Supervisor on shift to take over a challenging or crisis call.

What skills or qualifications do I need to volunteer on FriendLine?

We do not look for any specific qualifications to work on FriendLine. We value diversity and our volunteers come from all walks of life and have different backgrounds, ages, and

work experience. The skills we look for are excellent communication skills; the ability to carry a conversation and create an authentic connection. We also look for people who will be empathetic listeners and non-judgemental. For more information about the requirements of the position refer to the Position Description.

How long are the shifts?

Shifts are 2-3 hours, and we ask volunteers to do one shift per week.

When do shifts take place?

All shifts are undertaken in either our Carlton or Northcote office. In Northcote, shifts are from Monday to Friday during the day (10am- 6pm) and evening (6pm-830pm) and all weekend shifts (10am- 830pm) are from our Carlton office.

How many calls will I take per shift?

Most shifts are fairly busy with calls coming through consistently. Call takers usually take between 5 and 8 calls per shift.

Can I do extra hours if I want to?

Yes. We often have extra shifts to be filled and encourage volunteers to attend additional shifts if they are able.

What are the callers like?

We get a diverse range of callers from all across Australia. From our statistics we know that many of our callers are over 55 years of age, and a large percentage are from rural or regional areas. We also have younger people contacting us. The service is open to anyone across the country.

What sort of things do I talk about on FriendLine?

FriendLine involves talking to our callers as you would a friend or family member. This means that every call is different, and we encourage our call takers to have an authentic rather than scripted conversation. Chats are usually about everyday topics like the weather, hobbies, news etc. During FriendLine training sessions more information is given about creating conversations and how to handle different types of calls.

Can I use volunteering on FriendLine towards my placement hours?

Yes. FriendLine can be used towards placement hours. It is up to the volunteer to speak with their education provider to determine whether FriendLine volunteering meets the requirements. Note: we do not provide clinical supervision.

Is Friends for Good registered to take Centrelink volunteers?

Yes. We are registered to take Centrelink volunteers. If you are successful in the recruitment process and require the details for Centrelink, please let us know and we can provide the organisational information.

What sort of support is offered?

Before starting on FriendLine all volunteers undertake training and orientation. During shifts there is always a Supervisor available to offer support. Individual and group debriefings are also provided by Supervisors.

I already have a Police check; can I submit that?

No. Police checks need to be completed through CrimCheck via a specific link that will be sent to you if you are successful in the recruitment process. Friends for Good will pay for your Police check and it will be kept in our secure system.

Who can be a referee? Is it ok to have my family or friends?

To be recruited to work on FriendLine you must provide two professional referees. This cannot be a friend, colleague or family member. Professional referees include people who have supervised your work (paid or voluntary) or study.

I'm not sure how long I can commit to volunteering, is it ok to start anyway?

We ask volunteers to commit to a minimum of 6 months with the organisation. It requires considerable resources to recruit and train new volunteers and we therefore aim to have minimal turnover. If you are unsure how long you can commit for, this may not be the right position for you.