

WAC 388-61A-1040 What are the requirements for a crisis hotline or helpline?

(1) Emergency shelters must provide a crisis hotline/helpline telephone number for accessing the services of the domestic violence program. The telephone number must be widely distributed throughout the service area covered by the domestic violence program and be identified as the crisis hotline/helpline of the program.

(2) The crisis hotline/helpline service must comply with the following minimum requirements:

(a) It must operate twenty-four hours a day, three hundred sixty-five days a year;

(b) It must be a dedicated telephone line that serves as the crisis hotline or helpline;

(c) Staff that answer the hotline/helpline must be trained in, periodically review, and be familiar with, the crisis helpline/hotline written procedures and all referral and intake practices of the domestic violence program;

(d) In most cases, callers to the hotline/helpline must be able to speak, within fifteen minutes, to a trained staff person who can help the caller obtain services, including access to emergency shelter;

(e) Staff must have access to a telecommunications device for the deaf (TDD) or similar technology, and they must be trained in its use; and

(f) Staff must address safety in every call.

(3) You must have crisis hotline/helpline written procedures that address the following:

(a) How crisis hotline staff will meet the needs of non English speaking and hearing impaired callers;

(b) Steps staff must take when a caller requests emergency shelter; and

(c) If you use an answering service or another similar system, how you will provide training to the staff of the answering service and monitor the services they provide to your program.

(4) If you use a call forwarding system for your domestic violence program's hotline/helpline, answering service, or any other similar system, you must guarantee that the caller's first contact is supportive.

(5) You may use an answering machine, voice mail, or similar recording device as a back up means of responding to calls to your program's crisis hotline/helpline. However, these devices must not be used as your program's primary method of answering crisis hotline/helpline calls. Messages left on your program's answering machine, voice mail, or similar recording device must be returned within the timeframe described in this section.

[Statutory Authority: Chapter 70.123 RCW. WSR 18-09-015, § 388-61A-1040, filed 4/10/18, effective 5/11/18.]