

Financial Advocacy Specialist

For over 50 years the Distress Centre has served Calgary and Southern Alberta, providing 24-hour crisis support, information, and resources at no cost. Distress Centre does not define crisis. We do not judge. Anyone can call us day or night.

What to expect in the role:

Job overview

The Financial Advocacy Specialist provides direct services to individuals facing financial crises through multiple access points—phone, text, chat, email, and in-person. This role focuses on building financial literacy including but not limited to budgeting, goal setting, debt reduction, resource navigation, and advocacy to help program participants regain stability and build long-term financial resilience.

Key Outcomes

- Program participants experience measurable progress toward financial resilience through personalized coaching, budgeting strategies, debt reduction plans, and resource navigation.
- Eligible participants successfully access and utilize available Distress Centre financial assistance programs, as an emergency financial crisis intervention strategy.
- Financial advocacy services are consistently delivered with professionalism and accuracy, supported by timely follow-ups, comprehensive reporting, and adherence to best practices in financial empowerment.
- Crisis and Navigation staff have the tools, resources and understanding they need to be able to provide high-quality service to individuals seeking financial support.

Key Responsibilities

- Act as the primary contact for referrals from 211 and agency partners related to financial advocacy and assistance.
- Work directly with participants to:
 - Assess financial instability and develop personalized financial empowerment plans.
 - Provide short-term financial coaching (1–3 sessions) on budgeting, debt reduction, money management, and financial literacy.
 - Connect participants to relevant resources and advocate within complex systems (e.g., government benefits, income support).

- Conduct participant follow-ups to ensure high-level service quality and connection to appropriate support.
- Respond to calls, emails, texts, and online chats from individuals accessing Crisis and Navigation programs as they relate to financial advocacy.
- Support participants and agency partners in accessing financial assistance programs, including eligibility screening, application and documentation assessment, and fund distribution.
- Providing information, updates, and support to Crisis and Navigation staff to ensure they have up to date information to communicate to service users regarding financial empowerment and assistance resources.
- Educate and consult with community partners on financial assistance programs, access, and eligibility.
- Complete financial assistance reporting, including participant data tracking, fund distribution budget tracking, documentation review and related administration.
- Attend regular team meetings with Basic Needs Fund Collaborative front-line team
- Stay current on financial empowerment tools, resources, and best practices and make recommendations for implementation and on-going program improvement.

Multi-role with set shift requirements per month as a Community Resource Specialist (CRS).

- Assess the needs of inquirers on 211 and partnership lines through phone, text, online chat and email.
- Provide appropriate information and referrals in response to those needs, utilizing our resource database.
- Provide advocacy on behalf of the inquirer with regard to accessing services.
- Offer follow-up service to inquirers on effectiveness of referrals provided.
- Support resource database accuracy by reporting errors or listing requests to the Community Resource Database team.

The duties and responsibilities outlined above are representative but not all inclusive. Other related duties as required.

What you bring to the role:

Qualifications/Experience

- Diploma in Social Work or a degree in a related field, plus 1-3 years human services relevant work experience, specifically in case management, financial empowerment, or through work with vulnerable populations.
- Knowledge in financial counselling, financial coaching, and/or financial literacy is an asset.

- Advanced computer skills, including Microsoft excel and being adept at using internet search engines.
- Demonstrated self-management and time-management skills.
- Exceptional decision-making skills including problem solving, adaptability, and assessment.
- Advanced interpersonal and customer service skills.
- Strong and attuned attention to detail related to documentation, reporting, and participant interactions to ensure accuracy and consistency.
- Above average telephone communication skills.
- Knowledge and/or work experience in crisis intervention, addictions, domestic violence, suicide risk assessment and intervention, mental health, and/or youth issues is an asset.
- Knowledge of community resources and taxonomy knowledge an asset.
- Gender-Based Analysis+ Certification.

Skills/Abilities:

- Ability to make quality decisions using the DCC principles during the contact centre shift.
- Ability to set boundaries, and work closely with others.
- Ability to deal with ambiguity.
- Ability to prioritize and manage competing priorities independently.
- Ability to manage calls between 10 – 30 minutes interval.
- Ability to transcribe calls and interactions into online databases.
- Proficiency in documentation.

Lines of Communication/Accountability:

- This position reports to a Crisis and 211 Team Lead.
- Works closely with the Basic Needs Fund Collaborative Manager.
- Works closely with other members of the Crisis and Navigation team, and the Basic Needs Fund Collaborative partners.

Special Working Conditions :

- The 211 Financial Empowerment Specialist position involves contact centre shift work. The program is a 24/7 operation and scheduled contact centre shifts may include days, and evenings.
- This is an on-site role with some opportunities for remote work.

Core Competencies:

Client/Service Centred Work – you make clients the ultimate focus of our agency, team, and individual choices and actions.

Partnerships, Relationships, & Teamwork – you build and maintain productive, collaborative working relationships within and across groups, both internally and externally, to accomplish our common goals.

Growth Mindset/Learning – you actively identify new areas for learning and take advantage of opportunities to learn in whatever form they come. You apply your newly gained knowledge in your jobs and share these skills with others.

Communication – you clearly convey information and ideas through a variety of media in a way that engages the audience and helps them to understand and inviting dialogue and inciting action where appropriate.

Diversity, Equity & Inclusion – we build and sustain an inclusive work environment where all individuals are welcomed, supported, respected, and valued for their unique experiences, perspectives, talents, and contributions.

Change Management – you maintain your team and personal effectiveness when being impacted by changes within the organization.

Self-Management – you take responsibility for yourself and your actions.

What Distress Centre has to offer:

- Opportunity to work for an organization that's making a difference in our community
- A great working environment with supportive colleagues
- Opportunities for learning and mentorship, including paid development days and a staff development fund
- Competitive salary
- Benefits that include a matching RRSP
- Vacation time starting at 3 weeks