**For Immediate Release**



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**United Family Services is Recruiting Rape Crisis Companions in Charlotte/Mecklenburg**

**Charlotte -** Rape & sexual assault can affect anyone, regardless of age, sex, race, class, gender identity, or sexual orientation. 1 in 5 women will be the victim of a sexual assault over the course of their adult life.

Sexual violence is one of the most under-reported, hidden crimes in America. If you would like to become a comforting voice to rape victims in the Mecklenburg County community, United Family Services encourages you to consider becoming a Rape Crisis Companion.

“Volunteer companions respond to survivors of rape and sexual assault through a 24-hour crisis line and accompaniment at local hospitals to provide emotional support, information, advocacy and education,” said United Family Services Director of Counseling Brandy Stephens.

“Following extensive training, companions agree to accept four, 12 hour on- call shifts each month, and respond to hospitals to support and comfort victims of rape. Their work will make a profound difference in our community.”

**Rape Crisis Companions:**

* Promote the well-being and adjustment of child and adult victims of rape or sexual assault by providing crisis intervention services.
* Deliver services to clients by providing emotional support during hospital procedures, information about medical and legal protocol, and by linking clients and Victim Advocates.
* Assist child and adult victims and their family members by providing information about medical and legal procedures and guidance to those who call the Rape Crisis Hotline.
* Contribute to the dissemination of direct service information by maintaining accurate, up-to-date client records and by adhering to agency reporting requirements. This includes completing documentation for each client contact, providing staff with client’s follow-up contact information, and adhering to HIPAA protocol as outlined in training.

**Volunteer Qualifications**

* Ability to listen and communicate with empathy and to maintain non-judgmental attitude. Availability of a telephone and transportation to area hospitals. Must have clear criminal background check.

**Training**

* Successful completion of thirty (30) hour training program. Must exhibit cultural competence and the ability to work with diverse populations.

United Family Services will hold its next Rape Crisis Companion training in Charlotte. Training sessions will be held September 13, 15, 20, 22, 27 and 29. Thursday trainings take place from 6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m., and Saturday sessions take place from 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Training is comprehensive, so trainees must attend all sessions.

For more information, or to register, please contact Carol Roth, croth@ufsclt.org or 704-367-2799.

“Rape Crisis Companions are highly trained volunteers who provide a critical service to our community,” said Stephens. “A survivor could be anyone. It could be your neighbor or your neighbor’s child. They come from all walks of life. People in our community need to know they have this resource available to them.”

United Family Services assists more than 25,000 people annually throughout our geographic footprint that includes Mecklenburg, Cabarrus, South Iredell and Union Counties.  We also reach thousands more through our educational and prevention programs as well as institutional advocacy efforts.

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