

STUDENT ACTIVITY FEE

2016-2018

Byline Funding Application

**Empathy, Assistance, and
Referral Service (EARS)**



Submitted September 11, 2015

Empathy, Assistance, and Referral Service (EARS)

Request for 2017-19 Student Activity Fee Funding

EARS requested \$1.50 per student, per year. (no increase from past cycle)

Purpose and Background of EARS

For more than thirty years, EARS has provided free, confidential, counseling services, open to all members of the Cornell Community, as well as multi-tiered training and outreach programs. As a student-run organization, EARS benefits the community at many levels.

Counseling: The EARS counseling room is open seven days a week during the academic year. It is staffed by rigorously trained (90+ hours) and professionally supervised student volunteers, standing by to provide personal counseling on issues ranging from isolation to anxiety, stress, depression, relationship issues, eating disorders – the whole gamut of issues faced by individuals from every part of the campus. Counselors provide both in-person and over-the-phone services. On average these volunteer counselors handle more than 800 calls and walk-in visits to the EARS counseling room every academic year. No issue is too big, or too small for EARS counselors. Beginning two years ago, EARS, in partnership with Suicide Prevention and Crisis Services (SPCS) of Tompkins County has been assisting in staffing two nights of on-line live chat counseling sessions (Tuesday and Thursdays, 6-10 pm). SPCS will provide supervision for the first year at no additional costs.

Training: On average over 500 trainees participate in Beginning, Advanced or Intensive training every year. All three semester long training series run concurrently on Monday nights every semester. EARS in the academic year (2013-2014) in an effort to increase accessibility of EARS Beginning Training to west campus students offered training at Becker Hall for 50 students in addition to offering it at Robert Purcell Union. EARS will again provide this option to students in Spring 2016. We have not offered this program this academic year as we did not have enough available trainers. The weekly, two hour workshops offer in-depth training in communication and counseling skills. Sessions are open to all students, whether for personal life skills, or as preparation for becoming a counselor. The trainings also give members a chance to learn alongside people from throughout the campus. Based on demographic surveys conducted in training each semester, it is clear that EARS community reflects the larger diversity of the campus as a whole (a rich mix of ethnicities, genders, sexual orientation, ages, religions, different colleges (grad and undergrad programs). Trainees learn about empathic listening, human relations, leadership, specific challenges faced by college students and helping skills, and they gain self-understanding, compassion and appreciation for others.

Training Manuals: In the mid-year byline review process, several members of the appropriations committee raised concerns regarding the costs of using paper manuals for training and encouraged EARS to consider the feasibility of using electronic copies. These members asked us if we might invite trainees come to training with their laptops so as to

be able to refer to their on-line manuals during training. A couple of thoughts on this subject are as follows:

EARS manuals are not merely textbooks that are easily reduced to a PDF format but are more of a workbook that invites trainees to take notes and complete exercises. Trainees are invited to actively use their manuals during training – as they are engaged in “hands on skill training” on counseling and active listening. All too often the manual also becomes a tool for trainees to refer back to previous notes (of their own and from the actual manual) as they seek to further integrate skill building. Lastly, as most EARS training requires trainees to be assembled as they would be in a formal counseling session, holding lap tops is neither practical or conducive to promoting appropriate attending behaviors (maintaining eye contact, relaxed and inviting body posture, etc.). When we attend our hearing in November, we will be mindful to bring you copies of what we produce as manuals to help you better appreciate what we are speaking to.

Referral Services nationally now offer on-line training modules. But in consultation with CAPS, they agree that “hands on training” is essential in creating competent and confident peer counselors.

Beginning in January of 2013 and in 2014, EARS co-sponsored one annual ASIST Training (Applied Suicide Intervention program), a comprehensive two day training that aims to support counselors (and other campus leaders) in becoming more comfortable, confident and competent in helping to prevent the immediate risk of suicide. It should be noted that in a recent CNN article, it was reported that nearly 31% of students -- almost one out of three who sought counseling in the 2013-2014 academic year -- have said they seriously considered suicide at some point in their lives. Five years ago, it was 25%, according to the most recent annual report by the Center for Collegiate Mental Health at Penn State. (2014)

While EARS counselors attend two presentations on suicide prevention as part of their EARS training, we recognized that our counselors could benefit from the more expansive training that is nationally required by suicide prevention centers. We also acknowledged that this training would be beneficial to other student leaders as well.

Fortunately, EARS was able to secure co-sponsorship funds from Dean of Students Offices, Cornell United Religious Work, Gannett Health Center, as well as Cornell Minds Matter for the first two trainings. But we worried that without a solid funding stream this program would not be sustainable and our co-sponsoring organizations could not guarantee on-going funding.

As attendance at these trainings has to be capped at 25, EARS was grateful to receive additional funds (increase: .25 per student) in the last byline funding cycle which enabled us to hold our annual training in January but also a second training in February of 2015.

In 2014, Catherine Thrasher-Carroll, mental health promotion coordinator at Gannett attended our first ASIST training and concluded that this training is the perfect follow up program to the University run “Friend to Friend” program that many student leaders already attend. “Friend to Friend” training helps students (and others) to recognize the warning signs of depression, anxiety and suicide. The ASIST training gives students the skills to actively support a peer who is contemplating suicide.

Outreach: EARS members who pass a rigorous evaluation to become counselors may also volunteer to be trainers at all three EARS levels – and also to lead outreach workshops for campus groups. Outreach programs vary from year to year but in the past year included training for RAs and Orientation Leaders, Peer Advisors (AAP and Human Ecology), Leadership Conferences and Series (Fraternity and Sororities), Alternative Break, Humphrey Fellows, and nursing home volunteers. Two EARS counselors monitor and coordinate programmatic support as requests are received. In past years, EARS has partnered with Residential Programs and other student organizations on campus. These workshops reach more than 700 additional members of the Cornell community.

Leadership Development: Each year, some 25-30 students join the EARS staff, assisting in every aspect of organizing and running this complex service.

Public Relations/Marketing: In addition to many public speaking and training opportunities, students help coordinate extensive public relations and marketing activities to promote constant awareness of the counseling, training and outreach services.

Marketing Campaign For EARS outside of EARS:

The challenge for EARS counselors promoting EARS while maintaining their confidentiality has been an on-going challenge. This year EARS counselors will be “anonymously” staffing a number of CMM sponsored events in which they can be distributing information about EARS services in an informed manner. It is not enough to just have quarter cards circulating, one needs to have volunteers who have had some experience with EARS and can speak to the benefits of using the service. EARS trainers are more actively this semester engaging trainees as well to also promote EARS through distribution of quarter cards and to speak more openly to their friends about their experiences in training. Additionally last spring EARS was very grateful to a number of SA members who also included EARS in their tabling efforts to promote mental health services. We welcome conversations with the SA about how we might augment our efforts.

Effectiveness of SUN ads?

We do ask student trainees how they found out about EARS each semester and are never surprised that they list the Sun, campus mailings, friends, and posters. It is clear that to elicit engagement, we need to continue to promote EARS through a myriad of advertising options and not rely on just one method of advertising. That said the SUN ads are fairly expensive so we tend to run ads at the beginning of semester, mid semester and at the end.

Why not ask for additional funding?

EARS remains very satisfied with current funding. No additional funding is needed at this time.

DOS funding?

A preliminary budget submitted on Sept. 4th indicated a sizable contribution from DOS to the 2014 funding cycle. What we realized in formulating final budget review was that we were not reviewing the figures from end of year (previous numbers were from beginning of June). End of year accounting allows all of us to check to make sure charges are properly assigned. In the EARS example, co-sponsorship funds for the ASIST training had

not come in until end of year. Additionally the line items for speakers (was \$1000 over because EARS paid for ASIST trainers which was ultimately paid for by co-sponsoring organizations.) Additionally promotional budget had an expenditure that was incorrectly assigned from general office expenses. In the end DOS, was part of a co-sponsorship of ASIST but did not contribute money to general funds of EARS. With increased by-line funding and careful accounting on our part, our budgets have been balanced without need of requesting DOS support.

Description of the EARS Group

Officers

EARS leadership is distributed among several different programmatic areas, without specifically designated roles for a traditional President, Secretary, etc. Leadership of staff meetings is facilitated on a rotating basis. EARS has consistently had the following leadership roles: twenty-five different students serve as trainers, four as training coordinators; two students lead a ten-member outreach team; four students volunteer to assist in marketing and public relations; two students coordinate EARS room materials and record keeping; five students volunteer to provide leadership and oversight to the EARS testing process (Long Role Play) that are held four times to test trainees who wish to become recognized counselors.

Members

Fall 2015 counselors (Sept) 47

Expected additional counselors during F2015 (15-18)

Registration still open for all levels (registration is at about 80% of Fall 2014 numbers)

Members

Spring 2015 counselors (May) 69 (22 graduated in May)

Spring Registration for each 12 week training series

Beginning: 123

Advanced: 65

Intensive: 37

Total: 225

Members

Fall 2014 counselors (Dec.): 61 (20 will graduate in May)

Expected additional Counselors during S2015 (15-18)

Fall 2014 Registration for each 12 week training series:

Beginning: 160

Advanced: 71

Intensive: 34

Total: 265

Spring 2013 counselors: 65 (23 graduated)

Expected additional new counselors during 2011-2012: about 12-15 each semester

Spring 2013 Registrations for each 12-week training series:

Beginning 151

Advanced 90

Intensive 35

Total: 276

Fall 2013 Counselors 43

Fall 2013 Registration for each 12 week training series

Beginning: 171

Advanced: 61

Intensive: 28

Total: 260

Review of Training

Each semester trainees at all three levels are asked to complete mid-semester and end of semester evaluations. All evaluations are reviewed by the trainers and the advisor. We were a bit distressed by what appeared to be a bit of a drop in numbers for training last spring. It did not help that snow storms seemed to really like Mondays last semester but trainees also reported that the time commitment asked for (2.5 hours a week over 12 weeks) did at times feel daunting. Beginning this fall EARS has shortened training to 2 hours and is one week less in length. As requested, training is going to rely less on power point presentations and more on workbook exercises and presentation of skills in the small group format. EARS will continue to review training each semester with an eye to responding to trainee and trainer feedback and reflection.

A word about training for those who have not experienced it: Students come to training for a variety of reasons. Some are from the beginning primarily motivated in completing training to become counselors but the vast majority initially come for one or more of these reasons: to become better listeners, a more resourceful friend, and/or a more confident person socially. Beyond teaching counseling and listening skills, EARS training provides a safe and supportive space for trainees to reflect more deeply on their lives—their values, their goals (personally and professional), to better understand themselves and how to relate more compassionately and intimately with others. EARS training therefore does more than just provide training for those who wish to become counselors but also helps many others to strengthen their interpersonal skills and enlarge their sense of belonging (all of which helps to build a greater sense of resiliency and resourcefulness for each individual trainee.)

History

EARS was founded in the early 1970s to provide peer counseling for the Cornell Community. Training sessions have been held on Monday nights since the beginning of the program. The depth and complexity of the training model have developed and evolved over the history of the program, with successive generations of students and advisors refining the counseling skills and training techniques. Today EARS enjoys a reputation as one of the most rigorous and thorough collegiate counseling training programs in the nation. The phone line and walk-in service are widely used by members across the entire Cornell community. Outreach programs reach out to various campus groups on a wide variety of requested topics, focusing on communication skills and personal-growth issues. On average 5-7 other colleges and universities seek counsel from EARS in creating similar programs at other campuses.

Activities in Current Cycle

Counseling Service: Telephone and walk-in contacts in the EARS room are expected to continue at the average of 800 per year. EARS calls have remained constant since the last SAF funding cycle. EARS continues to experience a steady flow of students reporting serious depression and/or feelings of social isolation and suicidal feelings as well as a wanting to speak about a myriad of other psychological challenges. We continue to see an increase in students expressing worries about their finances and with worries about the post-graduation job market. EARS staff meet monthly for activity planning and in-service learning. These meetings invite speakers from campus and community to assist them in providing up-to-date resources.

Training: A new poster campaign was initiated this fall to promote EARS by using photos and testimonials from EARS alums. This inspirational campaign has sought to invite other students to see the value of being part of EARS. Traditional EARS brochure and other promotional materials (pens, tissues) about training and counseling continue to be distributed to offices across campus. Additionally EARS counselors launched a quarter card campaign last spring to emphasize how EARS is a place a student can get support for any concern they are facing. (we will bring a packet of these ads to the byline hearing) EARS counselors recognize that there is still more work to be done to combat the stigma associated with seeking counseling support.

Outreach programs: Workshops continued to be provided for RAs, Orientation Leaders, two groups of Peer Advisors (in Biology and Human Ecology), community center staff, Tatkon Center student staff, residence units, Graduate Student speakers series at the Big Red Barn, fraternity and sorority groups, and Graduate TAs. These workshops reached an additional 750 members of the Cornell community this academic year.

Academic year 2014- 2015: EARS workshops reached 650 participants. Additionally the EARS advisor has provided outreach to the Humphrey fellows (visiting scholars) and Ithaca College student affairs division and peer and faculty advisors for first year veterinary students.

Leadership Development: EARS staff continues to develop their roles as described above.

Public Relations: EARS marketing efforts include posters, flyers, print ads, power point ads, banners, tabling, public appearances, special projects, novelty items like pens and balloons, use of list-serves, chalking, direct mailings, quarter carding and more. All are designed to raise awareness of the free counseling and training services.

(Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training (ASIST) is for everyone 16 or older—regardless of prior experience—who wants to be able to provide suicide first aid. Shown by major studies to significantly reduce suicidality, the ASIST model teaches effective intervention skills while helping to build suicide prevention networks in the community. This is a two-day training program.

EARS sponsored the following trainings:

Jan. 15-20, 2015 20 students/4 university staff participated

Feb. 14-15 2015 23 students/2 university staff participated

(students were largely EARS and Cornell Minds Matter Student leaders

Jan. 16-17, 2014 25 students participated (largely EARS and Cornell Minds Matter Student leaders

In both trainings, EARS had a waiting list of students who we could not accommodate In fall of 2013, EARS asked increased funding from \$1.25 to \$1.50 to enable us to fund two trainings each year. While we did promote this training widely through DOS offices, training continues to attract largely leaders in EARS and Cornell Minds Matter although we had 2 RA's signed up in Feb. and in addition to students, we have had staff from DOS offices attend as well (CURW, OFSIL, SLECA, Crisis Management, OSCS, ISSO) Students have appreciated training with professional staff on campus.

We solicited feedback on these trainings. Here is one response that I think highlights the importance of this training:

*I left the ASIST Training with the tools and the confidence to help those with thoughts of suicide and with a reminder that people are willing to share their stories as long as we are willing to listen. This is a skill I will take with me wherever I go and I couldn't be more grateful to the amazing trainers for sharing their time and knowledge.
(Emma Gerstenzang, class of 2015, College of Arts and Sciences).*

“The Chat” http://www.suicidepreventionandcrisiservice.org/spv_online.html , a collaborative program between SPCS and EARS, an online service for teens and college students. Program seems to attract participants who are uncomfortable with calling by phone to SPCS or EARS. EARS counselors are assisting with staffing this service and EARS have incurred costs for the service that hosts this service that maintains confidential records (iCarol) SPCS has continues to provide supervision for counselors at no additional costs.

Itemized Budget for Proposed Student Activity Fee EARS

\$2,500	EARS telephone/internet service This funds two phone lines in the EARS room to handle the calls received and computer server to support "Chat".
\$4,500	Training materials Each EARS trainee receives a manual with readings and exercises that explain and illustrate the step-by-step acquisition of communication and counseling skills. Additionally, each trainer receives an additional manual with curriculum outlines/training exercises to draw from in training at each level. On average there are between 20-22 trainers each semester. Costs is consonant with stable numbers of students taking training and with training materials for ASIST training. We should emphasize that EARS training is very much hands on (counseling practice and working in smaller groups). Training materials are also created each year to give out at outreach workshops.
\$3,500	Consultant and Trainer Honoraria This covers payments to presenters and speakers at each training level, as well as consultants who assist EARS counselors in a variety of in-service trainings. It is imperative that trainees and counselors receive the latest, expert training on the complex issues they face. Additionally, it costs \$1000. to secure two ASIST trainers for each of the two day trainings at Cornell.
\$4,000	Promotional materials EARS uses a variety of materials, including tissues, pens, banners, t-shirts, bookmarks, and balloons, as give-aways to spread awareness about the EARS counseling phone number and hours throughout the campus community. The service only works when members of the campus community are aware that it is available. EARS continues to evaluate how best to promote our services. Electronic bulletin boards are utilized as well as campus mailings but truthfully, it would appear that giving away pens and tissues has been the most successful outreach effort.
\$1,550	Reprints for the EARS Brochure More than 2000 brochures about the phone service, training, and outreach, are distributed across campus each semester (primarily to student support services across campus, Residential Programs, Gannett Health Center, and EARS trainees.)
\$1200	Large Poster Campaign This campaign shifted toward the more personal campaign mentioned earlier (posters featuring Cornell EARS alums and their testimonials about how their involvement in EARS greatly impacted their lives at Cornell. They were widely distributed across the campus (especially into the residential communities and community centers) to publicize individual areas of EARS service: training, counseling and outreach.

\$2,500

Advertising in the Cornell Sun, Campus Planner, message boards etc. Quarter-page ads at least weekly in the Cornell Sun are supplemented each year by display ads in the annual campus planner and quarter cards distributed in residence hall mailboxes. EARS has maintained a modest advertising budget by relying more on social media (e.g., Facebook, listserves and info sessions) as well as quartercards but newspaper ads particularly the beginning of Fall semester and mid-semester when stress is building for most students still feels crucial

\$500

General Office Supplies/routine printing. (Additionally there is a costs involved in preparing folders for the testing for new counselors 4 times each semester

\$20,250.

EARS Budget

2012-2018

Revenues	Actual 13-14	Actual 14-15	Projected 15-16	Projected 16-17	Projected 17-18
<i>SAF</i>	\$ 15,838.00	\$ 20,250.00	\$ 20,250.00	\$ 20,250.00	\$ 20,250.00
<i>Internal transfer</i>	\$ 1,823.00				
<i>DOS</i>	\$ -				
Total	\$ 17,661.66	\$ 20,250.00	\$ 20,250.00	\$ 20,250.00	\$ 20,250.00

SAF-Funded Expenditures	Actual 13-14	Actual 14-15	Projected 15-16	Projected 16-17	Projected 17-18
<i>Telephone</i>	\$ 1,295.80	\$ 2,779.10	\$ 2,500.00	\$ 2,500.00	\$ 2,500.00
<i>Training Materials</i>	\$ 3,598.98	\$ 3,951.00	\$ 4,500.00	\$ 4,500.00	\$ 4,500.00
<i>Consultants/trainers</i>	\$ 2,540.00	\$ 3,540.00	\$ 3,500.00	\$ 3,500.00	\$ 3,500.00
<i>Promotional</i>	\$ 4,394.18	\$ 3,800.50	\$ 4,000.00	\$ 4,000.00	\$ 4,000.00
<i>Brochures</i>	\$ 1,241.17	\$ 1,540.00	\$ 1,550.00	\$ 1,550.00	\$ 1,550.00
<i>Large posters</i>	\$ 993.15	\$ 1,195.40	\$ 1,200.00	\$ 1,200.00	\$ 1,200.00
<i>Advertising/sun</i>	\$ 2,954.40	\$ 2,654.40	\$ 2,500.00	\$ 2,500.00	\$ 2,500.00
<i>Office supplies copying</i>	\$ 643.98	\$ 789.60	\$ 500.00	\$ 500.00	\$ 500.00

A 10% cut would result in eliminating one suicide prevention training annually

A 25% cut would result in eliminating both suicide prevention trainings and would eliminate all SUN ads

A 35% cut would make it impossible for EARS to function.

CONSTITUTION FOR EMPATHY, ASSISTANCE, & REFERRAL SERVICE

Article I. – The name of the organization

The name of this organization is Empathy, Assistance, and Referral Service (EARS).

Article II. – Affiliation with other groups

EARS is affiliated with the Dean of Students Office of Student Support.

Article III. – Purpose, aims, functions of the organization

EARS provides counseling, training, outreach and leadership development services, open to all members of the Cornell community. Free, confidential telephone and walk-in counseling is offered seven days a week during the academic year in the EARS room, 211 Willard Straight Hall. EARS counselors also volunteer each semester to train other Cornellians who wish to become counselors or to improve their listening skills, their awareness of themselves and of others. EARS offers leadership development to staff members who are able to take on key responsibilities within the organization. EARS also performs a community outreach function by responding to community requests for workshops in communication skills and related topics.

Article IV. – Membership requirements/limitations

Any member of the Cornell community may train to become an EARS counselor. In order to be allowed on staff, they must attend at least two semesters of training, and obtain at least four evaluations from EARS counselors. They must also successfully pass the Long Role Play, a full-length counseling session in which two EARS counselors evaluate the trainee. All staff members are required to attend four staff meetings a semester, as well as to evaluate two Long Role Plays. Each staff member is also responsible for at least one three-hour shift per week.

As an organization, EARS does not discriminate on the basis of actual or perceived age, color, disability, ethnicity, gender identity or expression, marital status, national origin, race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, veteran status, or any combination of these factors when determining its membership and when determining the equal rights of all general members and executive board members, respectively, which shall include, but are not limited to, voting for, seeking, and holding positions within the organization.

Article V. – Officers

EARS operates without formal officers. Leadership tasks for counseling, training, outreach and public relations are divided on a volunteer basis among the counseling staff to cover administrative responsibilities for each academic year. All counselors have an equal say and share equal responsibility for the program. Additional leadership positions within EARS include but are not limited to Beginning, Advanced and Intensive trainers, Long Role Play Coordinators, SAF representative, staff meeting facilitators, publicity, outreach coordinator.

Article VI. – Advisor

The advisor to EARS is the Associate Dean for Student Support, from the Office of the Dean of Students. Duties of the Advisor include assisting EARS volunteers in coordinating all aspects of the counseling, training and outreach and leadership development services.

Article VII. – Meetings

The EARS counseling office is open throughout the academic year: 3-11 pm Sunday through Thursday; 3-10 pm Friday and 6-10 pm Saturday. All three levels of EARS training meet from 7pm to 9:30pm on Mondays, throughout the entire semester. EARS staff members have four two-and-a-half hour monthly meetings each semester.

Article VIII. – Quorum

No quorum is needed at EARS staff meetings. Group and program decisions are based on discussion and the consensus of the members.

Article IX. – Referendum and Recall

Informal discussion, led by the staff meeting facilitator will be the norm at all staff meetings. Decisions on changes in the leadership roles will be based on the consensus of the members.

Article X. – Amendments

Amendments to this constitution can be proposed by any EARS counselor or the advisor and will be discussed and decided on at the next staff meeting by all present counselors.

Article XI. – Ratification

This constitution is adopted by the 2001-2002 staff of EARS, on behalf of all past, present, and future members of EARS.