



Volunteer-Support Manual



The mission of To Our House is providing thermal shelter and compassionate care to homeless men in the New River Valley, and to make available any resources that could help the men reintegrate into society.

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WELCOME TO *TO OUR HOUSE*

Winter, 2013-2014

Dear *TOH* Volunteers,

It is our privilege to join you as we begin the fourth season of our winter sheltering program for homeless men in the NRV area.

Volunteers are the heart and soul of *To Our House*. You bring the warmth of human companionship into our shelters. The gift of your time, meals, and your presence—your willingness to engage in a smile or a conversation with a neighbor in need of a hot meal and warm place to sleep—creates a sense of community benefiting all. To say that we are grateful is an understatement. Our program simply would not exist without you.

As we open our doors on November 2, we come together to help neighbors in need. We hope that you find this shelter season a rewarding service. On behalf of *To Our House*, we thank you for your kindness.

Please let any of us at *To Our House* know, at any time, how to make the service we offer together stronger. There is also a volunteer evaluation form included at the end of this manual so that we may improve our program for next year.

In peace,

To Our House Policy Council

Contact: Carol Johnson

TOH Program Coordinator

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Main Responsibilities for Host and Support Congregations

Host Congregation

Key Coordinator(s)

Primary Responsibilities:

- Overall planning for entire week, including coordinating with support
- Submit Master Schedule by Tuesday evening of week before hosting
- “Point” person for host congregation
- Smooth operation of host’s responsibilities

Host Congregation Provides:

- ❖ 10 Toiletry kits (soap, deodorant, shaving cream, razors, toothpaste, toothbrush, wash cloth)
Check with previous host to see if you need to provide the toiletry kits...

Support Congregation/Organization

Key Coordinator

Primary Responsibilities:

- Overall Support planning for entire week
- Submit Master Schedule to Host Key Volunteer by Monday evening of week before supporting
- “Point” person for support congregation
- Smooth operation of support’s responsibilities

Support Congregation Provides each day – please check with staff prior to your week to get an estimate of the number of guests:

- ❖ Cold breakfast food – cereal, milk, bananas, juice, bagels, cream cheese, coffee, cocoa, tea, sugar, other
- ❖ Dinner food for up to 15 (excluding support volunteers) (up to 12 men, 1 staff, and up to 2 host volunteers)
- ❖ Evening Snacks for up to 12
- ❖ Up to 12 Bag lunches

Other Ideas for either Host or Support:

- ❖ Bring sewing machine and do mending and repairs, iron and ironing board, have children make placemats or welcome cards, help with taxes, arrange with a barber to do hair cuts, ...

Important Things to Do When you First Arrive at the Shelter:

- Check in with the In-Charge volunteer when you arrive.
- Put your coat, personal items in designated area.
- Sign in on the current day’s log page

General Guidelines for ALL VOLUNTEERS

APPROACHING A *To Our House* GUEST

Many volunteers have little difficulty in unfamiliar social situations and need no guidance in matters of initiating conversation. However, the following may be helpful places to begin and build upon a conversation:

DO

- Introduce yourself to initiate conversation
- Be yourself
- Be warm, friendly, and available
- Share your experiences, strengths, and hopes as you are comfortable
- Let guests know you care
- Talk about sports, weather, movies, etc.
- Listen
- Have fun and be yourself

DON'T

- Try too hard
- Dig for personal information
- Ask a lot of questions
- Ask if a guest has children, is married/divorced
- Take it personally if a guest is non-responsive or does not want to talk
- Push religion or politics

VOLUNTEERS PLEASE NOTE

- Please do not let anyone in your building unless they are known to you.
- Please check with the *TOH* staff if you are unsure if an individual is a *TOH* guest.
- Current guests may only enter your site when the *TOH* staff is present.
- Terminated guests may not enter a *TOH* site, including the host congregation site, for any reason.
- Friends and extended family of guests may not enter a *TOH* site including the Host congregation site.
- Do not address any issue of concern with staff in the presence of any guests
- Outside of *TOH*, volunteers may engage with guests with whom they develop a particularly strong relationship, but volunteers may not follow guests to a host site and offer special services. Favored treatment of one guest must occur outside the *TOH* shelter program.
- The *To Our House* name may not be used by anyone without the explicit permission of the policy council.

ALL VOLUNTEERS SHOULD DEFER TO TOH STAFF IN THE FOLLOWING INSTANCES:

- Verbal or physical conflicts involving guest.
- Any discussion of a gift or financial contribution to a guest.
- Any acute medical condition of a guest (unless you are a Paramedic, RN, LPN or MD)
- Smoking times and place.
- The admittance of late guests.
- Removal of guests from our property.
- Assignment of cots or sleeping space.
- Passing out extra blankets or clean linen.
- Anything involving a violation of TOH Policy.

If you feel there is a problem in the performance of a Staff, call the Staff Supervisor.

VOLUNTEER/GUEST RELATIONS

- Consult with staff before giving a guest special attention. Do not give out any item to an individual or to the group without first checking with the Staff Member.
- Do not give out any personal information – address, phone number.
- Avoid touching guests without their consent.
- Try to use guest' names or respectful titles (Mr., Sir)
- Be respectful of different personality types (introvert, extrovert).
- Never take pictures of guest without their written permission.
- Practice a “ministry of presence,” making yourself available to your guests, not just talking among yourselves.
- Avoid taking sides in conflicts between guests.
- Help our needy guests avoid temptation by keeping your possessions (purses, coats, etc.) in a separate, secure room.

SUPPORT VOLUNTEER ROLES

KEY COORDINATOR

All Host and Support Congregations are required to have one person serving as the Key Coordinator. This person is *To Our House's* direct link to your congregation and to the person who coordinates your volunteers. We need to have his/her current address, email and home, work, and cell phone numbers. The Key Coordinator from both the Host Congregation and the Support Congregation work with the *TOH* staff to coordinate the functions listed in this manual. The Key Coordinator is not expected to be on site throughout the week, but there must be one designated person who is "in charge" of the volunteers each night that your congregation is sheltering.

SUGGESTED WORK TEAMS – Each team will have a Coordinator

***FOOD (1 team nightly from Support Congregation)**

Prepare and serve dinner each evening to be served between 6:00 and 6:30 p.m.
(depends on arrival time)

Clean up following dinner

Prepare evening snack each evening

Provide and prepare bag lunch for each guest

Arrange setup for coffee and tea all night, provide coffee, tea, milk, sugar, other

Menu

The menu is up to you. Please remember that some of your guests may work physically demanding jobs. Plan a big, hot, nutritious meal to be served soon after guests arrive. Use the meal-time as an opportunity to fellowship and eat with your guests. Clean-up tasks may be shared by guests and volunteers, though guests are not allowed in the kitchen. Provide a self-serve breakfast such as rolls, bagels, muffins, a boiled egg, and fruit or cereal with coffee, milk, juice and/or cocoa. PLEASE NOTE: Because many guests have dental problems, bananas are the only fruit that the guests tend to eat.

Special Menus

Some guests are diabetic, vegetarian, or cannot eat pork due to religious restrictions. Other guests cannot chew harder foods. Please plan to keep alternatives on hand for them.

Snacks

Your guests would most likely enjoy and appreciate a simple, healthy evening or bedtime snack.

***EVENING VOLUNTEERS (1-5 persons per evening from Support Congregation)**

If possible/desired, schedule evening activities to possibly include:

T.V./ Movies

Reading Area

Board Games/Cards

Friendly talking

Other activities as desired

EVENINGS

Activities should take place in a separate room from the sleeping area. Some of the men will want to opt out of activities and be in a quiet space. Be willing to participate in activities with your guests, but never force them to participate. Typical evening activities include videos/DVDS, television, table games, entertainment, and visiting. Also popular are reading materials such as magazines and short stories. Current editions of the newspaper are especially important for job hunters. During holidays, greeting cards to send to loved ones are especially appreciated.

Haircuts

Call up local barbers, or ask barbers or stylists in your congregation to make their services available.

Other Ideas

You can help your guests write their resumes, collect used rolling luggage from your volunteers to give to guests, bring sewing machines for repairs and alterations, provide an iron and ironing board, provide good clothes for job interviews, and help with taxes in February and March. You may want to provide access to volunteer nurses and doctors from your congregation.

VOLUNTEER RECRUITMENT

Some congregations assign nights of the week to individual classes or groups from the congregation and let them recruit. Other congregations post sign-up sheets where individual volunteers can claim specific nights, shifts or duties. You may want to contact the men's and women's groups in your congregation to recruit volunteers.

VOLUNTEER DATA

To Our House requires a registration form for each volunteer. Every volunteer who works must log in when at the shelter. Volunteer log-in sheets are at the shelter site each night in a Volunteer binder. We need volunteer hours to apply for both federal and private grants to support our shelter system.

VOLUNTEER TRAINING

To Our House provides training for Key Coordinators. Staff are available to provide training for your congregation/organization.

Daily Schedule: *To Our House*

- 5:00 pm The Intake Site opens, 110 Roanoke Street, Christiansburg
- 5:30 pm Transportation begins from the Intake Site, arrives at Host Congregations between 6:00-6:30 pm. Dinner is usually served immediately after arrival at Host Congregation, to be followed by evening activities such as medical services, entertainment, games, television, or showers.
- 11:00 pm Lights out in sleeping areas
- 5:30 am Breakfast available.
- 7:00 am Weekday departure time.

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Support Congregation: Key Coordinator

Very Early Planning Phase:

- Become familiar with *TOH* Volunteer Handbook, Coordinator Guidelines, Volunteer Guidelines. Take multiple responsibilities yourself if that seems right.
- Communicate and coordinate with your Pastor and governing bodies of your church.
- Educate the congregation about *To Our House*. Perhaps make a presentation for congregation, or ask *TOH* to do so.
- Put information in bulletin insert, newsletter, letters to men's group(s), women's group(s)
- Recruit Coordinators and Volunteers for both Meals and Evening Activities.
- Become familiar with *TOH* materials. Take multiple responsibilities yourself if that seems right.
- Well before your host or support dates, meet with and coordinate all responsibilities of Host Congregation and Support Congregation volunteers serving at the same time at the shelter.

Planning Phase:

- Oversee your Volunteer schedule using the Master Scheduling Form.
- Work with Coordinators to create schedules.
- Deliver your site schedule to the Host Congregation's Key Volunteer by late Monday of the week before you support.
- Have each volunteer *print* information for the Volunteer Registration Form *legibly*. The form includes the volunteer's name, address, email, home phone, cell phone, affiliation, and emergency contact information. This information should also be delivered to your Host site by late Monday evening.
- Add your congregation's emergency numbers.

Supporting-Your-Host Phase:

- Support *TOH* staff in communicating to volunteers that the guests like and respond well to a consistent routine. To make for a smooth transition, the staff maintain the same rules, regardless of the facility. **Volunteers should follow the staff's lead if any question about procedure or rules arises.**
- During your week(s) of the shelter, check in with your coordinators to see what they are hearing from their volunteers. Ask your coordinators to keep in contact with you. Follow up with anyone who has serious questions or concerns. Let *TOH* know if there is a problem they should address.
- Be sure you have the emergency phone numbers for your volunteers and for *TOH* staff and staff supervisor. Be sure that your volunteers have the numbers.

TO OUR HOUSE – HOUSE RULES

WEAPONS:

Weapons are not allowed. Box cutters, screwdrivers, pocketknives, etc., must be given to staff at Intake.

ALCOHOL / DRUGS:

The use or possession of alcohol or illegal drugs at Intake or shelter sites is strictly prohibited. Suspicion of this violation could lead to dismissal.

BEHAVIOR

Uncontrollable, disruptive or destructive behavior of any kind will not be tolerated.

VIOLENCE:

Threats of physical violence towards staff, volunteers, or other guests is not tolerated. Physical violence will result in a 911 call and immediate removal from the TOH shelter.

GUEST VISITORS

No visitors on church property, including the parking lot.

NOTE: Anyone violating any of the four above rules will not be permitted to return to *To Our House* at any time in the future.

LEAVING THE SITE:

Anyone leaving the shelter during scheduled hours will not be allowed to return that night.

LANGUAGE:

Verbal violence is not tolerated. Threatening or abusive language is not allowed. Please avoid cursing.

SMOKING:

Smoking is only allowed in designated areas and at designated times at Intake and at shelter sites. Guests must clean up after themselves, leaving no butts on the ground. Violation of this rule could jeopardize the smoking privilege for everyone.

PERSONAL BELONGINGS:

All guests are limited to two bags. Belongings left behind without staff approval will be discarded. For your safety and the safety of others, we reserve the right to search personal belongings of our guests.

APPROPRIATE ATTIRE:

Guests are required to sleep in appropriate attire. Shirt and pants must be worn at all times.

SHELTER RESPECT:

1. Guests must respect the property of others.
2. Guests must be considerate of other guests, staff, and volunteers.
3. Headphones must be used with radios or other electronic devices.
4. Each guest is responsible for helping to keep the shelter, the bathrooms, and the smoking area clean.
5. Guests must limit their use of the bathroom if others are waiting.
6. Only quiet behavior after lights out at 11 PM until 5:45 AM.
7. Guests must leave the shelter by 7:00 AM.

Due to limited space and resources, the continued participation of current guests could be re-evaluated; factors which may be considered include but are not limited to level of need, behavior at the host sites, and progress toward individual guest goals.

TO OUR HOUSE reserves the right to suspend guests who do not comply with House Rules.

TO OUR HOUSE EVALUATION

Feedback from you and your volunteers is also very important. We use this information to evaluate employee performance, program effectiveness and quality of volunteer experiences. Be sure to fill out the Evaluation Form at the end of each week you host. The Evaluation Form is attached for your use.

To Our House THANKS YOU – with all our heart!

Finally, in the midst of all your dedicated and hard work, please remember to have fun during your week of *TOH*. Help others to see it as a time of education, humility, and reflection. From all of us at *TOH*, we offer you our deepest and most sincere gratitude. Thanks to you, homeless individuals are shown hospitality and hope, receive respect and dignity, experience a safe and warm environment for the night, and share food and fellowship with each other and your congregation. Thank you!

NOTES

To Our House EVALUATION FORM

CONGREGATION: _____

HOSTING DATES: _____

Person completing evaluation: _____

PLEASE ASSIST US IN EVALUATING TOH STAFF PERFORMANCE

Overall how would you rate the staff? **Poor Fair Average Good Excellent**

Did the staff maintain order among the guests? **Poor Fair Average Good Excellent**

Did staff actively seek interaction with volunteers and guests? **Poor Fair Average Good Excellent**

Was the staff caring toward the guests? **Poor Fair Average Good Excellent**

PLEASE ASSIST US IN EVALUATING THE PROGRAM

Rate your volunteer experience this week: **Poor Fair Average Good Excellent**

Is there anything *TOH* could do to make your job easier?

Were there any difficulties or concerns about guests?

PLEASE ASSIST US IN RECORDING VOLUNTEER ACTIVITIES

Did any other congregation or outside group assist you?

Other comments: (if needed, please use back of page)

**Please complete this form at the end of your volunteering each week and give it to:
a *To Our House* staff member or the Key Volunteer from your congregation.**