



Volunteer Handbook

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***Welcome to
North Hills Community Outreach (NHCO)***

Thank you for choosing NHCO as the place where you want to volunteer your time, skills, knowledge and heart. As a North Hills Community Outreach volunteer, you play an important role in helping members of the community to improve their quality of life. This generosity defines NHCO's philosophy of ***people helping people***.

Introduction

NHCO's core service area is northern Allegheny County north of the City of Pittsburgh. The majority of NHCO's programs serve this area.

Families experiencing hardship come to NHCO for many different reasons. The top five reasons are 1) hunger 2) general financial hardship 3) utility assistance 4) transportation assistance and 5) un/underemployment.

This handbook serves as a reference to help you understand why and how NHCO incorporates volunteers. It explains requirements, fosters understanding of our policies and procedures, answers questions volunteers often ask, and demonstrates how our volunteers are integral members of the NHCO team.

Mission, Vision and Values

Our Mission: North Hills Community Outreach is an interfaith nonprofit organization addressing the needs of people in crisis, hardship and poverty.

Our Vision: Northern Allegheny County is a sharing community where no one should be cold, hungry or alone.

Our Values:

- **Faith:** Recognizing the love of God for everyone.
- **Compassion:** Treating all individuals with dignity, understanding and caring.
- **Empowerment:** Fostering self-sufficiency and improved quality of life.
- **Stewardship:** Managing our resources in a trustworthy and responsible manner for the good of the community.

Why Volunteers are important to NHCO

NHCO operates with a small staff. We offer approximately twenty programs to low-income neighbors. Staff fulfills NHCO's mission with the assistance of the 1,000-plus volunteers that give their time and expertise to helping these neighbors in need.

Volunteers are NHCO's greatest ambassadors. They increase our visibility in the community, increase our capacity, and increase our partnerships within the community.

Who to Contact for Volunteering

The Volunteer Coordinator is the contact for adult, group and mandated community service volunteer opportunities. The Garden and Youth Volunteer Coordinator is the contact for youth volunteer opportunities.

Staff Supervision

All volunteer positions are supervised by assigned staff members. Some staff members delegate lead volunteers to assist them for specific projects. Volunteers' questions and concerns should be addressed to the appropriate staff member. Your opinions matter and you are encouraged to share your ideas and suggestions. The staff member will have the final decision.

Volunteer Trainings

All new volunteers are encouraged to attend the NHCN Volunteer Orientation. This is an hour-long presentation that provides an overview of NHCN's services/programs, and explains how volunteers assist the staff to administer the services and fulfill NHCN's mission.

Some specific programs require additional training, such as *In Service of Seniors*, *Free Rides for Seniors*, *Safety for Seniors* and *Free Tax Prep*. These trainings may be conducted on-line, at an NHCN site, or off-site.

Other trainings/orientations are conducted by individual staff members or their lead volunteers, and may require shadowing with another volunteer.

Volunteer Registration Forms

All volunteers should complete a volunteer registration form that includes contact information, their preferred areas of volunteerism, any physical limitations they may have, their availability, and a confidentiality waiver.

The Volunteer Coordinator reviews the registration forms following the volunteer orientations and assigns the volunteer to the appropriate staff member. You may be assigned to more than one staff member to ensure that you are able to participate in one or more volunteer opportunities. The staff members are responsible for following up with you to discuss their volunteer needs. You are free to accept or decline the opportunity. The staff members make every attempt to follow-up with the volunteers as soon as they possibly can, which may take a few weeks from the time they received the referral.

Times and Frequency of Volunteer Opportunities

Not all NHCOC volunteer opportunities are available daily or weekly. Many are seasonal, such as Sharing Projects, Free Tax Prep, the garden, and fundraisers. When a volunteer indicates interest in working in these areas, his/her name is added the appropriate list and **the**

volunteer is contacted at the time of the project.

When positions are filled, volunteers wanting to work in that area are put on a waiting list or substitute list, and are called on when needed or when the position opens. For this reason, new volunteers are encouraged to sign up for more than one volunteer opportunity.

Importance of Signing In and Out of Volunteer Logs

The volunteer log is the tool used to record each volunteer's hours. Each time an individual volunteers his/her hours are recorded, along with the date volunteered, the program volunteered for, and the location of the volunteer activity. This information is pertinent to accurately credit service, for grant applications and reports, NHC's annual report, and NHC's insurance.

Be sure to enter the sign-in time AND the sign-out time when signing the log. Please enter the correct job code. The job code listing should be displayed or easily located near the volunteer log.

Youth and Family Volunteer Opportunities

Older children, youth groups and families often find satisfying opportunities working in NHC's garden, performing yard clean-up or snow shoveling for homebound elderly neighbors, sorting fruit for the Citrus

Sale fundraiser, filling backpacks with school supplies, washing NHC0's vehicles, and other special projects. NHC0 encourages volunteerism for all ages and abilities. However, not all volunteer opportunities are appropriate for youth, and we do not have opportunities for very young children. Volunteers are advised to always ask the supervising staff person first before bringing children along to volunteer. Please be advised: NHC0 does not operate a child care area nor does it have one on its premises.

Group Volunteer Projects

NHC0 welcomes groups from congregations, businesses, organizations, schools, scout troops, and youth groups to volunteer for projects. However, most NHC0 group volunteer opportunities do not accommodate large groups. If a large group of six or more members offers to volunteer for NHC0, the group may have to be divided into several smaller groups to work on several different projects. When possible, NHC0 strives to identify projects to accommodate the larger groups, but these opportunities are not always available on the dates the groups wish to volunteer.

Absenteeism

The volunteer will be provided contact information of the supervising staff member. If for any reason you are unable to come on your scheduled day, please contact your

supervising staff member or other designated volunteer or staff member, by phone or email. If you know in advance when you'll be off, it is appreciated if you can notify the staff member of these dates to allow them time to call in a substitute for the designated dates you're off. Unreported absences of two consecutive scheduled days shall be considered as a resignation from volunteering.

Volunteer Extended Absence

NHCO will hold a volunteer position for up to three (3) months for a regularly scheduled volunteer. In the event of a regularly scheduled volunteer having an extended absence beyond three (3) months, staff may offer the opportunity to another volunteer to ensure the high quality of service provided to donors and clients.

NHCO understands the need to be flexible with volunteers' schedules related to travel, illness, recovery, family matters, or other circumstances. Volunteers are responsible for communicating their scheduling needs prior to their first date of absence.

If a volunteer is returning past a three month absence

- a. If the position remains unfilled, the opportunity may be extended to the returning volunteer.
- b. Staff may have filled the position with another volunteer.

- c. If the position is filled, NHCO will welcome the returning volunteer into another volunteering opportunity when available.

Conduct

North Hills Community Outreach is a professional environment. Volunteers are expected to present themselves in a professional manner:

- In appearance – wear clothing appropriate to the work environment where the individual is volunteering
- Behavior- showing respect to all staff, volunteers, donors, clients and callers
- Understanding – that the supervising staff member is in charge of the program/project
- Following the rules and requirements – maintaining high standards of conduct, ethics and financial responsibility is of paramount importance to NHCO. NHCO operates itself under the by-laws of the United Methodist Church, its Policy Manual, grant/contract requirements, and state, county and federal law.

Confidentiality, Trustworthiness, Dignity and Respect

“Volunteers are responsible for maintaining confidentiality of all privileged information to which they are exposed while serving as a volunteer, whether this

information involves clients, donors, staff, other volunteers, or other persons involved with NHC0.”

Everyone who walks through NHC0’s doors is treated with dignity and respect. This includes clients, donors, staff AND volunteers. These individuals trust that NHC0 is a safe place, that their private information does not go outside the NHC0 walls, **is not discussed** in the common areas of the offices, and their information/stories/ photos are not shared on email, social media or the telephone.

Conversations of this nature should take place behind closed office doors with the appropriate staff member.

Whistleblowing

Whistleblowing is a term used for reporting perceived unethical or illegal behavior by staff members, volunteers, board members, vendors, professional service providers and other affiliated organizations. Volunteers are encouraged to report known or suspected fraudulent or dishonest conduct to the supervising staff person. These behaviors may include, but are not limited to:

- Theft
- Violations of confidentiality
- Discrimination based on race, gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, disability and religion
- Disrespectful behavior towards staff, volunteers, clients and visitors
- Improper use or abuse of property

- Physical/verbal abuse
- Improper documentation of financial reporting, client services, and volunteer hours

Setting Boundaries

If a client confides in a volunteer that they are in need of money or a monetary item, the client should discuss this need with the supervising staff member. Volunteers should never give money directly to a client, offer to pay a bill for them, or purchase or give them a monetary item. Providing these needs to clients is part of NHCO's services. The staff member and service coordinators will work with the clients to address their needs.

Never offer to drive a client to a location. This, too, should be discussed with the supervising staff member. Programs such as *In Service of Seniors (ISOS)* and *Transportation Assistance* provide transportation options.

Volunteers should never make home visits to a client without being accompanied by a staff member or under the direction of a specific program, such as *Safety for Seniors* or *In Service of Seniors*.

Reassigning a Volunteer to a New Volunteer Position

If a staff member identifies that a volunteer is not a good fit for their volunteer position, or if the volunteer is struggling in some way in the area where they are volunteering, a discussion between the staff member and the volunteer will take place. The Volunteer Coordinator may be brought into the discussion or decision. NHCO will make every effort to find an appropriate and satisfying opportunity for the volunteer.

Termination

“NHCO accepts the service of volunteers with the understanding that such service may be terminated at any time for any reason by either NHCO or the volunteer.”

Situations that might warrant the termination of a volunteer:

- Acting in a disrespectful manner towards staff members, other volunteers, clients, donors or visitors
- Theft of anything on NHCO premises, including food pantry items, personal property of others, financial donations, or in-kind donations
- Breaching confidentiality
- Posting negative comments or information about clients/photos of clients on social media
- Unethical behavior

When a Volunteer Wants to Change to a Different Volunteer Position

A volunteer may want to change to another position for many reasons. They may have found that the position isn't what they really wanted. Sometimes after working in a specific area for a long time, the volunteer needs a change of roles. Or maybe the volunteer is looking for additional volunteer opportunities in other areas. If looking for a change, contact the current supervising staff member or the volunteer coordinator. Together, we will do our best to find you a satisfying volunteer opportunity.

Clearances

In the state of Pennsylvania, volunteers responsible for the welfare of a child or having direct contact with children are required by law to have up-to-date clearances. Similarly volunteers working with vulnerable populations are required to obtain clearances.

All NHCO staff has had to complete their clearances, as do individuals volunteering for the following NHCO programs:

- ***In Service of Seniors***
- ***Free Rides for Seniors***
- ***Salvation Army*** funded programs.

Most NHCO programs do not require volunteers of those programs to have clearances. To determine if you need to complete clearances please refer to the NHCO staff

member leading the particular program for which you are volunteering.

Obtaining clearances for volunteers in Pennsylvania is free, and can be completed online. Resources and information to apply can be found at www.dhs.pa.gov

Insurance Coverage for Volunteer Activities at North Hills Community Outreach

Information on insurance coverage for volunteers while serving at NHCOC is noted below, per NHCOC's insurance representative.

- Driving NHCOC's Free Rides for Seniors shuttles or NHCOC's van

NHCOC carries auto insurance on these three vehicles to cover damages and repairs. If you are injured your personal health insurance is primary. NHCOC's auto policy may cover some costs to you not covered by your own insurance.

- Driving your personal vehicle

NHCOC carries a General Liability policy that is in excess of your personal auto policy when you use your vehicle as a volunteer of NHCOC. Confer with your agent to ensure that you have sufficient coverage.

- General volunteering

If you are injured while serving as a volunteer for NHCO, our policy will pay up to the first \$500 to cover the cost of your co-payment and/or deductibles. Beyond this your own health insurance becomes primary. If you have no health insurance, our policy becomes primary up to our policy limit for Medical Payments.

Driving NHCO Vehicles

- NHCO may authorize volunteers age 21 or older to drive NHCO vehicles for NHCO business.
- Volunteers must be approved by a member of the NHCO Leadership Team. Volunteers must have a valid driver's license and provide a copy of it to NHCO. Volunteers must complete NHCO's Vehicle Usage Agreement consenting to notify NHCO within three business days of any driver's license suspension, moving traffic violations or accidents.
- Free Rides For Seniors (FRFS) drivers must complete the FRFS training prior to driving the shuttles and provide all the required FRFS documents
- Drivers must obey all traffic laws and speed limits.
- Any accidents or traffic violations are to be reported to NHCO's Director of Operations.
- Repeated accidents or traffic violations will result in volunteer's removal from the Authorized Drivers list.

Weather-Related Procedures for Volunteers

In the event of severe weather that may cause NHCO to have a one-hour delay or closing, volunteers will be notified of the situation by the supervising staff member. Delays and closings will also be listed on Facebook, as well as TV stations KDKA and WPXI. Or, volunteers may call NHCO's main line at 412-487-6316. Volunteers should never feel obligated to come to NHCO offices when the weather is questionable. If you choose to stay home on days of inclement weather, please notify the appropriate staff person of your cancellation for the day.

Pittsburgh Cares Retired and Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP)

RSVP is the largest volunteer network in the nation for people age 55 and older. NHCO is a partner of this free benefits program supporting senior volunteers. Benefits include transportation reimbursement, supplemental accident, liability, auto and life insurance, and invitations to recognition events, social activities and educational opportunities. Information regarding this program is available through NHCO's Volunteer Coordinator.

Mandatory Community Service Volunteers

It is NHCO's intention to provide meaningful volunteer opportunities to volunteers who are court ordered to perform community service.

- Mandatory Community Service Volunteers (CSV) are required to submit the court order prior to volunteering.
- CSV may work with NHCO if the offense was non-violent, and did not involve theft, weapons, terroristic threats, physical or domestic abuse.
- CSV must complete and sign the Volunteer Registration Form and sign and comply with the NHCO Community Service Guidelines.
- NHCO may terminate the volunteer at any time for any reason.
- NHCO cannot guarantee the ability to provide the volunteer opportunities that fulfill all the CSV required hours.

After completion of CSV hours with NHCO, the Volunteer Coordinator will submit a report to the magistrate or probation officer noting completed hours.

Volunteer Policy and Guidelines *

- A. A volunteer is anyone who without compensation or expectation of compensation performs a task at the direction of and on behalf of North Hills Community Outreach, Inc.

- B. Volunteers and staff should be considered partners in implementing the mission and programs of NHCOC, with each having a complementary role to play. It is essential that both staff and volunteers respect and understand the needs and abilities of the other.
- C. Volunteers are to be recruited and accepted without regard to race, color, religion, creed, age, gender, marital status, sexual orientation, national origin, military status or disability. Volunteers are selected based upon NHCOC's needs at any given time. Placement of volunteers is predicated on the interests and capabilities of the volunteer.
- D. Volunteers shall have available to them a supervisor for guidance and direction. Formal performance evaluations of volunteers are not required by NHCOC, but may be requested by the volunteer. Evaluations (such as student evaluations) will be forwarded to third parties at the consent of the volunteer.
- E. Volunteers shall obtain all certifications as required by law, such as ACT 33/34 clearances.

Guidelines

- A. **Special Case Volunteers:** NHCO accepts as volunteers those participating as individuals; those participating as members of a religious groups, civic or school groups; those court ordered to perform community services; persons participating in corporate volunteer programs; internship/student field placements; and those paid from third party sources and grant funded projects.
- B. **Scope of Volunteer Involvement:** Volunteers may be utilized in all programs and activities of NHCO at the executive director's discretion. Both staff and volunteers are encouraged to consider creative and innovative ways in which to utilized volunteers' time and talent.
- C. **Volunteer Termination:** NHCO accepts the service of volunteers with the understanding that such service may be terminated at any time for any reason by either NHCO or the volunteer.
- D. **Volunteer Recruitment:** Volunteers are recruited by NHCO on a pro-active basis with the intent of broadening and expanding the volunteer involvement of the community and in meeting NHCO's mission.
- E. **Volunteer Assignment:** Intake interviews with volunteers will determine suitability for

volunteer positions. These interviews may be done in person or by phone. No assignment or placement shall be made without the consent of both volunteer and NHCO. Volunteers may opt for long-term or short-term positions or assignments. Volunteers may seek different and additional volunteer assignments.

- F. Supervision of Volunteers: Each volunteer will have a clearly identified supervisor who is responsible for direct management of that volunteer. Volunteers should expect staff and supervisor involvement in work assignments and projects. Volunteers are entitled to necessary information pertinent to the performance of their assignments. Principle responsibility for ensuring that the volunteer receives appropriate information will rest with the direct supervisor of the volunteer. Lines of communication between volunteers and staff should exist both formally and informally.

- G. Minors as Volunteers: The volunteer activities assigned to a minor will be performed in a non-hazardous environment and will comply with child labor laws.

- H. Confidentiality: Volunteers are responsible for maintaining confidentiality of all privileged information to which they are exposed while serving as a volunteer, whether this information

involves clients, donors, staff, other volunteers,
or other persons involved with NHC0.

**Excerpted from NHC0's Policy & Procedure Manual*

As the organization processes and procedures change, it is expected that staff, board members and volunteers comply with the change.

*Thank you for joining the NHC0 Team to help our
neighbors in need!*

We value your contribution!

We value your time!

We value YOU!