



# 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 are an important part of helping members of the community 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 5) un/underemployment.

Two of NHCO's four values are: Faith – recognizing the love of God for everyone; and Compassion – Treating all individuals with dignity, understanding and caring. We expect our staff and volunteers alike to treat everyone in accordance with those values. NHCO is committed to providing service to all in our community regardless of religion, race, sexual orientation or gender identity.

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 NHC**

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

Volunteers are NHC'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 a staff member. 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 NHCO Volunteer Orientation. This is an hour-long presentation that provides an overview of NHCO's services/programs, and explains how volunteers assist the staff to administer the services and fulfill NHCO'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 NHCO 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, sections for the individual to indicate their preferred areas of volunteerism, list any physical limitations they may have, explain their availability, and sign a confidentiality waiver.

The Volunteer Coordinator reviews the registration forms following the volunteer orientations and assigns the volunteer to the appropriate staff person. 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 NHCO volunteer opportunities are available daily or weekly. Many are seasonal, such as Sharing Projects, Free Tax Prep, the garden, and fundraisers. When volunteers indicate that they are interested in working in these areas, their names are added to lists and **they are called on 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 logs are the tool used to record each volunteer's hours. Each time an individual volunteers their hours are recorded, along with the date they volunteered, the program they volunteered for, and the location of where they volunteered. This information is pertinent to accurately give the volunteer credit for their service, and also for grant applications and reports,

NHCO's annual report, and NHCO's insurance. When signing the log, be sure to enter the sign-in time AND the sign-out time. 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 by working in NHCO's garden, yard clean-up or snow shoveling for homebound elderly neighbors, filling backpacks with school supplies, washing NHCO's vehicles, and other special projects.

NHCO 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: NHCO does not operate a child care area nor has one on their premises.

## **Group Volunteer Projects**

NHCO welcomes groups from congregations, businesses, organizations, schools, scout troops, and youth groups to volunteer for projects. However, most NHCO group volunteer opportunities do not accommodate large groups. If a large group of six or more members offers to volunteer for NHCO, the group may have to be divided into several smaller groups to work on several different projects.



When able, 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 their 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.

## **Returning to Volunteering After Illness**

In all cases of confirmed or suspected Coronavirus (or other widespread communicable illness), employees/volunteers are directed to follow the guidance of healthcare providers and the local health department. The decision to stop home isolation should be made in consultation with healthcare providers and local health department.

Employees/volunteers who were not tested for the Coronavirus (or other widespread communicable illness)

but who had symptoms of such ailment, are directed to care for themselves at home, and may discontinue isolation under the direction of a healthcare provider.

## **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.

## **Volunteers and Political Activity**

Under IRS regulations 501(c) 3 nonprofits, such as North Hills Community Outreach, may “not participate in, or intervene in [including publishing or distributing of statements], any political campaign on behalf of [or in opposition to] any candidate for public office. While all staff and volunteers are free to express political opinions and engage in political activities on their own time, it is important that they do so only in their individual capacities and avoid even the appearance that they are

speaking or acting for NHCO in political matters. This includes but is not limited to wearing campaign buttons and attire, circulating nomination petitions, soliciting or accepting political contributions, and posting or distributing campaign signs or literature.

## **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 NHCO.”

Everyone that walks through NHCO’s doors is treated with dignity and respect. This includes clients, donors, staff AND volunteers. These individuals trust that NHCO is a safe place, that their private information does not go outside the NHCO 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 NHC0 staff has had to complete their clearances, as do individuals volunteering for the following NHC0 programs:

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

Most NHC0 programs do not require volunteers of those programs to have clearances. To determine if you need to complete clearances please refer to the NHC0 staff member leading the particular program to 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](http://www.dhs.pa.gov)

## **Insurance Coverage for Volunteer Activities at North Hills Community Outreach**

Here is some information on insurance coverage for volunteers while serving at NHC0 per NHC0's insurance representative.

*Driving NHC0's Free Rides for Seniors shuttles or NHC0's van*



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

### *Driving your personal vehicle*

NHCO carries a General Liability policy that is excess over your personal auto policy when you use your vehicle as a volunteer of NHCO. 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 staff person supervising the volunteer's position. 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 NHCO, 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 shall be recruited without regard to race, color, religion, creed, age, gender, marital status, sexual orientation, national origin, military status or disability. Volunteers are selected based upon NHCO'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 NHCO, 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.

## **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: NHCOC accepts the service of volunteers with the understanding that such service may be terminated at any time for any reason by either NHCOC or the volunteer.
  
- D. Volunteer Recruitment: Volunteers are recruited by NHCOC on a pro-active basis with the intent of broadening and expanding the volunteer involvement of the community and in meeting NHCOC'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 NHCOC. 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 should be performed in a non-hazardous environment and should 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 NHC.

\*Excerpted from *NHC's Policy & Procedure Manual*

## **Closing**

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 NHC Team to help our neighbors in need!*

*We value your contribution!*

*We value your time!*

*We value YOU!*

