



VOLUNTEER HANDBOOK

VOLUNTEERS OF AMERICA
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Welcome to Volunteers of America of Minnesota and Wisconsin

Thank you for your interest in joining our work of supporting and uplifting the individuals and communities we serve. Volunteers like you are at the heart of what we do, and we're excited to have you as part of our team. Your time, energy, and compassion make a real difference—and we're here to help you thrive in your role.

Getting Started: Handbook Review

To ensure a safe, respectful, and effective volunteer experience, all volunteers are required to read and follow the guidelines outlined in this handbook. If anything is unclear, we encourage you to ask questions—your understanding is important to us.

We regularly review and update our policies to reflect best practices and evolving needs. You'll be notified of any changes at least once a year, or sooner if necessary.

Before beginning your service, you'll be asked to sign a consent form confirming that you've read, understood, and agreed to follow the practices and procedures in this handbook.

Organizational Information

Volunteers of America of Minnesota and Wisconsin is a nonprofit health and human services organization committed to serving people in need, strengthening families, and building communities. Through a comprehensive range of services and networks, we work with over 23,000 community members every year as they navigate challenges they face on their paths toward hopeful, healthy, and stable lives.

VOA-MN offers person-centered, holistic services in pursuit of its mission, *to help people build hope, resilience and well-being through the integration of health, housing and human services.*

VOLUNTEER HANDBOOK

This handbook is designed to support you in your volunteer journey and help ensure that the mission of Volunteers of America is carried out effectively. We regularly review and update its contents to keep the information relevant, aligned with our values, and useful to you as a volunteer.

Volunteer Code of Conduct

As a volunteer with Volunteers of America Minnesota and Wisconsin, you are a valued representative of our mission and values. This Code of Conduct outlines the expectations for ethical, respectful, and professional behavior.

Core Principles

Volunteers are expected to uphold the following values in all interactions:

- Compassion – Treat everyone with kindness, empathy, and dignity.
- Integrity – Be honest, accountable, and transparent in your actions.
- Perseverance – Stay committed to our mission, even in challenging situations.

General Conduct

Volunteers agree to:

- Act respectfully and professionally toward clients, staff, fellow volunteers, and community members.
- Maintain confidentiality of all sensitive or personal information.
- Avoid any behavior that could be perceived as discriminatory, harassing, or threatening.
- Follow all organizational policies, procedures, and safety guidelines.
- Refrain from using their role for personal gain or to influence others inappropriately.
- Report any concerns, misconduct, or unsafe conditions to a supervisor promptly.

Within Client Interactions:

- Respect the rights, dignity, and privacy of all clients.
- Provide support without judgment or bias.
- Avoid forming personal relationships that could compromise professional boundaries.
- Never offer medical, legal, or financial advice unless specifically trained and authorized.

Within Team Relationships:

- Collaborate with staff and fellow volunteers in a spirit of mutual respect.
- Communicate openly and constructively.
- Use appropriate channels to raise concerns or provide feedback.
- Support a positive, inclusive, and safe environment for all.

Compliance

By volunteering, you agree to follow this Code of Conduct and all applicable laws, regulations, and organizational policies. Violations may result in reassignment or dismissal from your volunteer role.

Becoming a Volunteer

Volunteers are individuals who generously give their time and talents without compensation to support the mission of Volunteers of America Minnesota and Wisconsin. Your service helps us extend care and connection to those who need it most.

Getting Started

Before beginning your volunteer journey, you'll need to complete a registration process. This may vary depending on the type of volunteer role, but rest assured—all personal information is kept strictly confidential and verified only as needed.

Background Checks

For the safety of our clients and community, some volunteer roles require a criminal background check for individuals 18 and older. These checks must be completed and approved before placement. In some short-term roles with direct staff supervision, a background check may not be required.

Placement Process

If you're interested in an ongoing volunteer opportunity, you'll meet with our volunteer coordinator and program staff to explore the best fit for your skills and interests. Once your application and any required screenings are complete, we'll work with you to find a meaningful placement.

Volunteering as a VOA Employee or Former Staff

Current employees may not volunteer in roles that overlap with their paid positions. However, they are welcome to apply for volunteer roles in other programs or locations. Former staff members are also encouraged to apply to volunteer.

Volunteer Roles and Orientation

Each volunteer position includes a clear job description outlining key responsibilities. We encourage open communication—if you have questions or suggestions about your role, please share them with your supervisor. Job descriptions are reviewed regularly and updated as needed.

All volunteers will receive an orientation to help them understand our mission, values, and operations. This orientation is a shared effort between program staff and the volunteer coordinator to ensure you feel informed and supported from the start.

Volunteer Information

1. Getting Started: Training and Support

We're committed to setting you up for success. Every volunteer receives:

- A clear job description outlining your responsibilities
- Orientation and training to help you feel confident in your role
- Ongoing support and supervision from staff

Each program identifies training needs and offers opportunities for continued learning. If you're interested in attending a training session, let your supervisor or Volunteer Coordinator know. Some optional trainings may have a cost, which would be the volunteer's responsibility unless required for your role.

2. Youth Volunteering

We believe in nurturing the next generation of changemakers. Volunteering as a child, teen, or young adult can be a powerful and inspiring experience. While individuals under 18 cannot volunteer independently, they may participate:

- As part of a group or with an adult chaperone
- In roles that are age-appropriate and supervised
- With a signed waiver from a parent or guardian (see Addendum 1)

These guidelines ensure a safe and positive experience for everyone involved—volunteers, staff, and clients alike.

3. Tracking Your Volunteer Hours

Your time and dedication are incredibly valuable. We ask all volunteers to keep an accurate record of their hours. This helps us:

- Report meaningful impact to funders and grantmakers
- Demonstrate the value of volunteer contributions
- Maintain proper documentation in case of any incidents

Please check with your Volunteer Coordinator or program supervisor for instructions on how and when to submit your hours. Your efforts truly make a difference!

4. Attendance and Reporting Absences

Because our programs provide essential services, your reliability is important. If you're unable to attend your scheduled shift, please notify your program staff or Volunteer Coordinator as soon as possible—ideally at least 24 hours in advance. This helps us ensure continuity of care for those we serve.

5. Creating a Safe and Respectful Environment

We are committed to fostering a welcoming, inclusive, and respectful space for all. Discrimination or harassment of any kind will not be tolerated.

Our Commitment

We prohibit harassment or discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, disability, marital or family status, public assistance status, military or veteran status, sexual orientation, gender identity, or any other protected characteristic.

Understanding Harassment

Harassment may include:

- Derogatory comments, slurs, or jokes
- Threatening or intimidating behavior
- Unwelcome physical contact
- Sharing offensive materials
- Sexual harassment, including unwelcome advances or inappropriate comments

If you experience or witness harassment, report it immediately to your supervisor, department head, or the Volunteer Coordinator. We will respond promptly, maintain confidentiality as much as possible, and protect against retaliation.

6. Respecting All Abilities

We proudly serve individuals with a wide range of abilities, including those with mental health conditions such as PTSD, depression, anxiety, and ADHD, as well as physical and sensory disabilities. Discrimination based on disability is strictly prohibited.

Some programs include nursing staff and adaptive spaces to meet client needs. Your empathy and respect help us create a supportive environment for all.

7. Confidentiality

As a volunteer, you may have access to sensitive information. We trust you to handle it with care and professionalism.

- Respect privacy: Keep all personal and sensitive information confidential.
- Protect proprietary information: Do not share internal documents or data without permission.
- Upon ending your service: Return all materials and property belonging to Volunteers of America.
- Use information responsibly: Use what you learn only in service of our mission—not for personal gain.

If you're ever unsure about what can be shared, please ask your supervisor or Volunteer Coordinator.

8. Drug-Free Environment

To ensure a safe and healthy space for all, we maintain a drug- and alcohol-free environment. Volunteers are expected to:

- Arrive fit to perform their duties
- Avoid bringing or using drugs or alcohol on VOA property (except prescribed medications)

- Inform a supervisor if medication may affect your ability to volunteer safely

If a volunteer appears impaired, they may be asked to leave. This decision will be made by the Volunteer Coordinator or program director.

9. Smoke- and Tobacco-Free Environment

To promote health and safety, smoking, vaping, and tobacco use are only allowed in designated areas—typically at least 25 feet from any building entrance. These activities are not permitted in:

- Clients' homes
- Agency vehicles
- Any vehicle transporting clients

Thank you for helping us maintain a clean and respectful environment.

10. Weapons-Free Environment

For the safety of all, weapons—including firearms—are strictly prohibited on VOA premises, regardless of licensure. This includes:

- All VOA buildings and facilities
- Clients' homes
- Agency vehicles
- Any location where you are volunteering on behalf of VOA

Only authorized law enforcement personnel are exempt. If you suspect a violation, report it immediately to your supervisor or a security officer. All reports will be taken seriously and investigated promptly.