



Volunteer Handbook



October 2014

PREFACE

The preparation of this handbook has been a collaborative effort of Friendship Place staff and volunteers with the goal of making available to new and current volunteers a reference document with information on the role of volunteers in helping Friendship Place achieve its mission. The material in the handbook is of a general nature that applies to our various programs and services. In addition to this general handbook, separate brief handbooks are being prepared for volunteers working at the Welcome Center, AimHire, Veterans First and Neighbors First programs to provide particulars that apply to each of them.

We would like to express our appreciation to N Street Village for kindly sharing its volunteer handbook with us. It served as a useful reference and inspiration to us as we developed this one.

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I. Introduction

Friendship Place's mission is to empower individuals and families experiencing or at risk of homelessness to rebuild their lives, with the involvement of the community. In working toward this mission, Friendship Place applies a service model that embraces innovative, customized, person-focused programs aimed at empowering participants to rebuild their lives, find homes, get jobs, and reconnect with friends, family, and the community, permanently.

Volunteers play a key role in helping to implement Friendship Place's individual-centered approach to meeting homeless individuals' needs by assisting staff in providing services



that will help to achieve the organization's mission. Because each volunteer is integral to the services we provide, please ask questions, share observations, and offer suggestions to help us become even more effective in the successful implementation of our services.

This handbook contains general information about volunteering at Friendship Place. It is designed to be a basic reference to help volunteers to learn about the programs implemented by Friendship Place staff and the roles, responsibilities, and expectations of volunteers in supporting staff. The handbook also includes general information about homelessness and reference material that will help you understand how Friendship Place can best serve its participants. Please review this handbook before taking up your volunteer assignment and keep it for future reference. Together with the orientation and training that you will be expected to undertake, it should help you to fulfill your volunteer role here.

Welcome to Friendship Place! We look forward to working with you.

II. Overview of Friendship Place

Founded in 1991 by a grassroots coalition of businesses, congregations, and community activists, Friendship Place has become a leader in Washington, DC, in developing and implementing solutions to homelessness that have positive, demonstrable results and a lasting impact. While the primary geographical focus of Friendship Place historically has been Ward 3 of the District, over time some programs (e.g., Veterans First, AimHire) have expanded to include individuals in the broader metro area.

Our model for addressing homelessness features innovative, customized, person-focused programs that empower participants to rebuild their lives, find homes, get jobs, and reconnect with friends, family and the community, permanently. We accomplish our mission with a team of highly qualified and dedicated staff and with the help of more than 300 volunteers and 27 neighboring congregations, several of which partner with us to provide shelter or housing.

Our total revenue in Fiscal Year 2013 (October 2012–September 2013) was \$4,252,083. Contributions from individuals comprised 45% (over \$825,000) of private gifts and grants in FY 2013, while congregations, local businesses, associations, fees for services, and foundations, and proceeds from our special fund-raising initiatives contributed the remaining 55% (over \$1,000,000) of our private funding. Government funding (US Department of Housing and Urban Development [HUD], US Department of Veterans Affairs [VA], and the DC Government) provided the remaining support, which totaled \$2,432,346.

We also receive in-kind (non-monetary) goods and services. The value of these contributions is estimated to exceed \$200,000 in FY 2013 and included food, clothing, toiletries, and furnishings for program participants.

Summary of services and programs

Friendship Place provides services to individuals experiencing or at risk of homelessness through the following activities:

- **Outreach:** We provide services to individuals who are homeless where they are, with a focus on the hardest to serve. In 2013, we connected with 130 individuals in upper-NW DC.
- **Welcome Center hospitality and case management services:** We offer food, coffee, basic needs, showers and laundry, phone and Internet access, and case management support for individuals. In 2013, 575 individuals received these amenities/ services at the Welcome Center, which averaged more than 40 visitors a day.

- **Free Health Care:** We also provide medical and psychiatric consultations through medical personnel funded by Unity Health at the Welcome Center. In 2013, we provided 701 medical and 329 psychiatric consultations at the center.
- **Transitional Housing:** We solicit and manage congregation-sponsored shelters and apartments for job-ready participants. Fifty-eight individuals were housed in upper-NW DC in 2013.
- **Direct Housing:** We also support rapid rehousing to help people move directly from the street into affordable, private-market housing. In this program's first year of operation, 112 people (in 70 households) were housed.
- **Permanent Supportive Housing:** We work with partners who subsidize housing to ensure housing stability for individuals who were previously homeless. These funding partners include Anne Frank House and the DC Government. In 2013, 212 individuals supported by Neighbors First and the Welcome Center received housing, achieving a housing stability rate of 98 percent under the Neighbors First program. The stability rate for Welcome Center placements was somewhat lower but still appreciable.
- **AimHire Job Placement and Housing program:** We support an individualized approach to help participants assess their skills and interests as well as issues that stand in the way of their success in securing and retaining employment and housing. Participants work with an employment specialist and are supported by a team of staff, consumers, volunteers, and board members. An advisory council comprising these people guides and supports the director and staff of this program. Through this program, 116 men and women found jobs in 2013; 113 were stably housed in the DC metro area.
- **Before 30 Program:** This program provides job placement and housing support for participants age 17–29.
- **Veterans First:** This Veterans Affairs-funded program (1) helps homeless veterans and their families regain housing quickly and (2) prevents homelessness among veteran households at risk of losing their housing. In 2013, this program served 464 veterans and their family members, including 60 female veterans and 150 children. Of 323 people who exited the program during the year, 96% achieved stable, permanent housing; the rest accepted temporary housing in the DC area.
- **Community Engagement:** Our outreach to the community involves presentations and meetings with congregations, schools and colleges, businesses, professional associations and conferences, other nonprofits, government entities (DC, federal, and Maryland). Our senior staff, board members, program participants, and volunteers take part in these activities to educate, advocate, share best practices, and build partnerships.

Location of offices and program service sites



Our normal office hours are 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday, except for participant visitation hours to the Welcome Center which are noted below. All programs are closed on federal holidays and follow the U.S. Office of Personnel Management's policies for federal government employees (found online on opm.gov) concerning snow days and other special workday closings.

Friendship Place Administrative Office

3655 Calvert Street NW
Washington DC 20007
202.503.2967

Welcome Center

4713 Wisconsin Ave NW
Washington DC 20016
202.364.1419

Hours:

Mondays: 8:30–11:30 AM & 12:30–4:00 PM;
Tuesdays–Fridays 8:30–11:30 AM & 1:00–3:00 PM

AimHire and Before 30 Program

4652 Wisconsin Ave NW
Washington DC 20016
202.248.0496

Neighbors First

3636 16th Street NW, Suite AG54
Washington DC 20010
202.248.3564

Veterans First

3636 16th Street NW, 4th Floor
Washington DC 20010
202.248.2801

Veterans First

5568 General Washington Drive, Suite A214
Alexandria VA 22312

Board of Directors and Participant Council

Friendship Place's Board of Directors reflects the diversity of our community. About half our board directors are designated by partnering religious congregations, with the rest elected at large to represent the community and business sectors. Board members promote awareness of Friendship Place and its mission, volunteer in its programs, and contribute financial support. The Board's executive structure includes two co-presidents, a vice president, secretary, and treasurer, and a 15-member executive committee. Our 2014 board is comprised of two business community representatives, 27 congregations, and 25 representatives of the broader community. Appendix 1 is a complete list of board membership.



Board Co-Presidents Sally Craig and David DeSantis

Also, individuals who have participated in a Friendship Place program comprise a participant council. This group includes housed participants and individuals seeking housing and services. This council meets regularly with our executive director and staff leaders of the respective programs that are implemented by Friendship Place.



Board directors representing the Participant Council.

Friendship Place staff



Friendship Place is very fortunate to have a highly qualified and dedicated team of some 60 staff who implement our programs. They draw on the support of a dedicated group of volunteers and interns who assist them in professional and administrative tasks. A complete, up-to-date list of staff and their positions is maintained on the

Friendship Place website at friendshipplace.org and in Appendix 2. An organization chart showing the organization's structure with its various divisions is in Appendix 3.

Program partners

While Friendship Place directly provides a broad array of services to individuals experiencing or at risk of homelessness, it also partners with other organizations who provide additional services including shelters, permanent housing, food donations, clothing, and medical and dental services. Many of these partners have representatives on our Board of Directors and thereby help define and support our mission and services. A list of key partners is provided in Appendix 4.

Other external organizations serving people experiencing homelessness

Other organizations that provide services for people experiencing or at risk of homelessness include the DC Government, US Department of Veterans Affairs, HUD, various congregations, and other non-governmental organizations. Each provides specific services (i.e., meals, shelters outside Ward 3, dental care) and/or funding to support individuals experiencing homelessness and their families. Please work with staff in directing individuals to these services as appropriate; Appendix 5 has more information.

III. Understanding Our Program Participants

Some basic facts about homelessness

"Homelessness" means having no home or permanent place of residence. According to the National Alliance to End Homelessness, in 2013, more than 610,000 people experienced homelessness on any given night in the United States. Of that number, more than 222,000 were people who constituted nearly 71,000 families, and nearly 388,000 were individuals. About 18% of the homeless population, more than 109,000, was "chronically homeless," and about 12% of homeless adults (57,849) were veterans.¹

In 2013 the District of Columbia had an estimated 6,865 individuals experiencing homelessness, including 983 families, and in the greater metro area, this number was estimated to be 11,547.² Results of the Point in Time Survey in January 2014 indicate that the regional homeless population size increased during 2013 by 3.5% to 11,946.

Seven of the nine jurisdictions that make up the metro area actually saw a decrease in homelessness, but DC saw a 13% increase.³

The causes of homelessness are complex and varied and include mental illness, substance abuse, and poverty. For example, in 2010, an estimated 26.2% of sheltered homeless persons suffered from severe mental illness, and 34.7% of sheltered homeless adults had a pattern of chronic substance use, with some suffering from

¹ National Alliance to End Homelessness website – based on point in time January 2013 survey

² Source: Homelessness in Metropolitan Washington. Report prepared by Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments, May 2013.

³ Source: Homelessness in Metropolitan Washington. Report prepared by Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments May 2014.

both.⁴ Unemployment and low paying or part-time jobs also contribute to homelessness. Surveys over the past several years have found that from 13%–25% of adults experiencing homelessness in urban areas were working, but could not afford housing on their minimal incomes.⁵

For all these and related reasons, homelessness persists as a significant national and local concern, and the number of families experiencing homelessness, in particular, is growing.



Friendship Place philosophy and approach in working with individuals experiencing homelessness

Friendship Place

- Is participant centered and builds—in an empowering way—on the strengths and capacities of homeless individuals at their level of readiness/ engagement;
- Remains flexible in working with participants over time according to their evolving needs and strengths;
- Works with each individual based on his or her particular situation to set personally relevant goals, and
- Works with the individual to gradually build capacity to move beyond a homeless environment.

In implementing this model of service, Friendship Place staff emphasize the following principles and practices:

- Facilitating progress through a process of assessing needs, reviewing/ modifying interventions, and focusing on achieving wellness;
- Adhering to a strong code of ethics;

⁴ Source: Current Statistics on Prevalence and Characteristics of People Experiencing Homelessness in the United States (July 2011) published by SAMHSA (www.homeless.SAMHSA.gov).

⁵ Source: “Why Are People Homeless?” NCH Fact Sheet #1, Published by National Coalition for the Homeless June 2007.

- Maintaining appropriate boundaries in relationships in working with participants;
- Treating participants with dignity;
- Observing confidentiality;
- Taking a holistic approach with wrap-around services in working with participants;
- Encouraging the participant to be actively engaged in the rehabilitation process;
- Accentuating the notions of hope and change; and
- Celebrating achievement and recovery.

IV. Volunteer Management Procedures and Processes

Initial Screening and orientation

Procedures that apply to volunteers vary somewhat in each of the Friendship Place program areas and sites, depending on volunteer job assignments and tasks. Details are provided in each program's/site's handbook. The procedures described here, however, apply to all volunteers.

As a new volunteer, you will participate in an initial screening process to enable you and Friendship Place staff to jointly determine how you might contribute to the organization's programs most effectively and in a way that taps your relevant skills and energy, and also meets your expectations. During this process you will be asked to complete the following forms which are kept on file for reference by staff (see Appendix 6 for these forms). These forms include:

1. Volunteer Candidate Application Form
2. Volunteer Confidentiality Statement
3. Volunteer Informed Consent Form



Once your assignment has been determined, you will meet with the division director or supervisory staff member for orientation to the assignment. Each division also has a designated capacity-building volunteer who has worked in that program area for some time and who, together with peer volunteers in the division with responsibilities similar to yours, will provide more detailed information on carrying out assignments. Thus, there is a substantial support system to enable you to learn about and adjust to your assignments quickly.

Volunteer scheduling

During the initial screening and orientation phases, you will explore how your time availability can fit the needs of your assignment. Many of the assignments require commitment to a regular, agreed-upon weekly schedule. For positions that involve interacting with participants and other external visitors (e.g., Welcome Center or AimHire front desk reception, AimHire job counseling), volunteers are expected to make every effort to meet their commitments to ensure continuity of service.

Ongoing support and supervision

Supervisory staff and fellow volunteers will provide ongoing support in answering any questions you may have about assignments. Mentoring of volunteers by other volunteers and volunteer coordinators also can be arranged as needed.

Volunteers are asked to join staff at occasional program meetings. Attending these meetings will help you to stay informed about current activities as well as plans for any new program developments. In addition, you will take part in an individual performance review meeting with your staff supervisor on a quarterly basis to discuss performance and progress from the perspective of the supervisor. This meeting also provides an opportunity for you to raise any concerns and/or offer suggestions on how program activities might be improved. Where called for, adjustments in your role and responsibilities can be made to ensure that the needs of the organization and your own needs are appropriately met. A copy of the quarterly volunteer performance review and feedback form is included in the Appendix 6.

Tracking volunteer participation and hours served

We ask volunteers to record their time at Friendship Place. Each division and program area provides a log book or other system for you to sign in and out. Keeping track of

volunteer hours is useful as a monitoring tool, and it also provides valuable aggregate-level information to share with the Board of Directors and donors contributing to the organization. This aggregate information on volunteer hours demonstrates the extensive contribution that volunteers make to the successful implementation of our services.

Training opportunities

Staff and external experts offer several training programs to volunteers. Some trainings are expected to be completed within six months of joining Friendship Place, while others are optional but strongly recommended. Trainings include:

1. General Orientation to Friendship Place and Role of Volunteers
2. Homelessness and the Friendship Place Mission
3. Boundaries and Confidentiality
4. Wellness and Recovery
5. Dual Recovery I
6. Dual Recovery II
7. Motivational Interviewing
8. LGBTQ Awareness Training
9. Civil Rights, Equal Employment Opportunity and Fair Housing
10. Cultural Diversity

Trainings 1-7 should be completed within 6 months of joining Friendship Place, while the remaining three are recommended but not required. Additional optional trainings may be offered as well. Each training event lasts two to three hours.

V. Role of Volunteers at Friendship Place

Overview

Volunteers play a key role in helping staff to reinforce the principles and practices of Friendship Place. The range of volunteer opportunities varies by program area. For example, in AimHire, volunteers work directly with participants in helping them to prepare for and carry out a successful job search. They assist participants in their searches and applications for various positions, help them develop persuasive resumes,

build their interviewing skills, and perform other job-counseling tasks. Volunteers at the Welcome Center cover the reception desk, take in-coming phone calls, direct visitors and callers to the appropriate staff person, and answer basic questions about Friendship Place. Other volunteers regularly pick up donated food from local commercial establishments for the Welcome Center. Volunteers also take on administrative tasks, such as helping to organize fundraising events, special drives for clothing, and the advocacy and education events we sponsor. Other volunteers with specialized technical or professional skills provide expertise in areas such as legal counseling, media development, data entry, computer support, proposal writing, etc. Thus, volunteers contribute in a variety of important ways to Friendship Place, offering their time and skills to support its mission and the successful implementation of its programs.

Volunteer boundaries and confidentiality

In fulfilling these important roles, volunteers have direct and indirect interaction with our participants in various ways. Accordingly, it is critical that each volunteer give careful attention to boundaries and confidentiality. Setting boundaries in social interaction in a social service settings such as Friendship Place helps to delineate appropriate distance in relating to participants. As a volunteer, you will need to be sensitive to such boundaries to ensure that they are consistently observed in your interactions with participants.

In the same way, you must carefully observe confidentiality—that is, refrain from sharing personal information about participants. Protecting confidentiality demonstrates respect for others. It also helps to build **trust**, give the other person a **sense of dignity**, and honor the person's **right to privacy**, required within **the legal and ethical framework** in which Friendship Place operates. Being proactive to maintain confidentiality (by saying things like “I am not allowed to talk about this” or “I can’t tell you whether or not this person is served here”) helps avoid compromising confidentiality.

Representing the organization

As a volunteer, you represent the organization to others, so your actions and behavior as a volunteer reflect on the organization. It is essential that you remember that you represent the organization in your interactions with external groups and individuals. It is also important to keep in mind that at times you may be put in a position or situation where others outside Friendship Place may view you as an “official representative” who

can speak for and make commitments on behalf of the organization. In such circumstances it is important to be clear that you do not officially speak for the organization and are not in a position to make commitments for the organization. This stance applies to potential participants as well as the media and other external organizational officials whose queries may more appropriately be handled by a staff member who can officially speak for Friendship Place.

You can, however, play a very helpful role in linking people who have inquiries or specific support requests to the appropriate staff person. You can also be a very important advocate, educating others about homelessness and about the important role that Friendship Place plays in serving individuals experiencing homelessness or at risk of homelessness in our community.

Being sensitive to your role as described above helps to ensure that Friendship Place carefully observes its legal requirements and maintains the highest professional and ethical standards in working with participants, institutional partners, and other organizations in carrying out its mission.

Basic volunteer ground rules when interacting with participants and other external contacts

The following ground rules should be observed when working as a volunteer at Friendship Place.

1. Clearly define your relationship from the onset and offer explanations if requested so that the participant and anyone external to Friendship Place understand the boundaries and confidentiality framework within which you as a volunteer are working.
2. Do not share your personal information—home phone number, address, personal issues—with participants.
3. Do not accept valuable gifts or exchange money.
4. Learn to say “I don’t know.” Suggest that you can refer the person to a specific staff member who can help.
5. Be mindful of your tone and terminology; find a balance between being supportive and compassionate and being professional.
6. Set limits, and learn how to say no and be all right with it.
7. Refer specific professional, human service questions and issues to the appropriate staff person for action.
8. Always be mindful of ethics, boundaries, confidentiality, and basic rules that apply to your volunteer responsibilities.

Remember, you are an important part of the Friendship Place team. Supporting the programs and staff by following these ground rules will help to reinforce the organizational culture within which Friendship Place operates and will help us to achieve the organization's mission.

Standards of conduct

During your initial meetings with the staff supervisor, performance standards and expectations will be discussed to make sure there is a clear understanding on performance and attendance expectations. As noted earlier, regularity and consistency in fulfilling time commitments are important in helping to ensure the efficient delivery of services. However, in instances where you cannot meet a commitment at a scheduled time on a particular day, you are expected to notify the person responsible for maintaining the schedule for your position (generally, the volunteer coordinator) well in advance of the time period, so a backup volunteer can be found to fill the time slot.

In addition, you are expected to adhere to the appropriate boundary and confidentiality standards, discussed earlier, in your interactions with participants, and you are expected to meet the highest ethical behavior standards in your actions as a volunteer at Friendship Place. During the quarterly performance review meetings, you and your supervisor will discuss any questions or concerns about maintaining appropriate standards of performance. Note that a volunteer may be dismissed if corrective action is not taken as needed to meet expected performance standards.

VI. Emergencies, Crisis Events, Security Procedures

In the unlikely event that you encounter an emergency or crisis situation while working at a Friendship Place facility, you should immediately inform the relevant staff member who will take appropriate action. Such crisis situations may include a medical emergency, aggressive behavior on the part of a participant, or other "acting out" social behavior that impacts on others in a Friendship Place facility. Handling an emergency or crisis situation is the primary responsibility of the staff members at each Friendship Place site, once they are aware of the situation. If the staff member asks you to assist, you may, but you should always defer to the staff member. In instances where a staff member cannot be found right away to take necessary action, contact other Friendship Place senior staff for assistance, and if necessary call 911 for immediate assistance.

Please note that each Friendship Place facility has special arrangements and guidance for dealing with crises or emergencies pertinent to that site. You will be briefed by

staff during orientation on the particular guidance that applies to your site and volunteer assignment.

Staff members are responsible for the general security of each facility, including all office equipment. You are expected to report to your supervisor or site director any potential security-related risk or danger of loss of property or other valuables. You should also take care to carefully secure your own personal valuables while working at Friendship Place.

In case of a fire, follow R.A.C.E. procedures

R = RESCUE: Remove anyone in immediate danger.

A = ANNOUNCE ALARM: Alert staff to page all in building; pull nearest fire alarm.

C = CONFINE the fire if possible, closing all doors and windows in the immediate fire area if time and circumstances allow.

E = EXTINGUISH fire if easily possible without endangering yourself or others with an available fire extinguisher while waiting for the fire department.

Try to remain calm during any crisis situation so that you can provide appropriate assistance and support. **Do not put yourself in danger** in addressing any crisis or emergency.