



Volunteer Handbook

First Step, Inc

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The Volunteer Program

1.10 Overall Policy on Utilization of Volunteers

The achievement of the goals of this agency is best served by the active participation of citizens of the community. To this end, the agency accepts and encourages the involvement of volunteers at all levels of the agency and within all appropriate programs and activities. All agency and staff are encouraged to assist in the creation of meaningful and productive roles in which volunteers might serve and to assist in recruitment of volunteers from the community.

1.11 Purpose of Volunteer Policies

The purpose of these policies is to provide overall guidance and direction to staff and volunteers engaged in volunteer involvement and management efforts. These policies are intended for internal management guidance only, and do not constitute, either absolutely or unambiguously, as binding contractual or personnel agreement. The agency reserves the exclusive right to change any of these policies at any time and to expect adherence to the changed policy.

1.12 Scope of Volunteer Policies

Unless specifically stated, these policies apply to all non-elected volunteers in all programs and projects undertaken on behalf of the agency, and to all departments and sites of operation of the agency.

1.13 Role of the Volunteer Management Department

The productive utilization of volunteers requires a planned and organized effort. The function of the volunteer management department is to provide a central coordinating point for effective volunteer management within the agency, and to direct and assist staff and volunteer efforts to jointly provide more productive services. The department shall also bear responsibility for maintaining liaison with other volunteering-utilizing programs in the community and assisting in community-wide efforts to recognize and promote volunteering. The Volunteer Program Manager shall bear primary responsibility for planning for effective volunteer utilization, for assisting staff in identifying productive and creative volunteer roles, for recruiting suitable volunteers, and for tracking and evaluating the contribution of volunteers to the agency.

1.14 Definition of "Volunteer"

A "volunteer" is anyone who without compensation or expectation of compensation performs a task at the direction of and on behalf of the agency. A "volunteer" must be officially accepted and enrolled by the agency prior to performance of the task.

1.15 Special Case Volunteers

The agency also accepts as volunteers those participating in student community service activities, student intern projects, corporate volunteer programs, and other volunteer referral programs.

1.16 Service at the Discretion of the Agency

The agency accepts the service of all volunteers with the understanding that such service is at the sole discretion of the agency. Volunteers agree that the agency may at any time, for whatever reason, decide to terminate the volunteer's relationship with the agency.

The volunteer may at any time, for whatever reason, decide to sever the volunteer's relationship with the agency. Notice of such a decision should be communicated as soon as possible to the volunteer's supervisor.

1.17 Volunteer Rights and Responsibilities

Volunteers are viewed as a valuable resource to this agency, its staff, and its clients. Volunteers shall be extended the right to be given meaningful assignments, the right to be treated as equal coworkers, the right to effective supervision the right to full involvement and participation, and the right to recognition for work done.

In return, volunteers shall agree to actively perform their duties to the best of their abilities and to remain loyal to the goals and procedures of the agency.

1.18 Scope of Volunteer Involvement

Volunteers may be utilized in all programs and activities of the agency and serve at all levels of skill and decision-making. Volunteers should not, however, be utilized to displace any paid employees from their positions.

Volunteer Management Procedures

2.1 Maintenance of Records

A system of records will be maintained on each volunteer with the agency, including dates of service, duties performed, and evaluation of work. Volunteers and appropriate staff shall be responsible for submitting all appropriate records and information to the Volunteer Management Department in a timely and accurate fashion.

Volunteer personnel records shall be accorded the same confidentiality as staff personnel records.

2.2 Conflict of Interest *(Please Sign Attached Document)*

No person who has a conflict of interest with any activity or program of the agency, whether personal, philosophical, or financial shall be accepted or serve as a volunteer with the agency.

2.3 Representation of the Agency

Prior to any action or statement which might significantly affect or obligate the agency, volunteers should seek prior consultation and approval from appropriate staff. These actions may include, but are not limited to, public statements to the press, coalition, lobbying efforts with other organizations, or any agreements involving contractual or other financial obligations. Volunteers are authorized to act as representatives of the agency as specifically indicated within their job descriptions and only to the extent of such written specifications.

2.4 Confidentiality *(Please Initial Attached Document)*

Volunteers are responsible for maintaining the confidentiality of all proprietary or privileged information to which they are exposed while serving as a volunteer, whether this information involves a single staff, volunteer, client, or other person or involves agency business.

Failure to maintain confidentiality may result in termination of the volunteer's relationship with the agency or other corrective action.

2.5 Worksite

An appropriate worksite shall be established prior to the enrollment of any volunteer. This worksite shall contain necessary facilities, equipment, and space to enable the volunteer to effectively and comfortably perform their duties.

2.6 Dress Code

As representatives of the agency, volunteer, like staff, are responsible for presenting a good image to clients and to the community. Volunteers shall dress appropriately for the conditions and performance of duties.

The following personal appearance guidelines should be followed:

- “Professional” clothing should be worn when representing First Step, Inc to the community
- Flip flops/beach shoes are not allowed. Tennis shoes are allowed as long as they are clean and in good shape.
- Tank tops, tube or halter tops, or spaghetti-strap blouses may not be worn under any circumstances
- No fishnet or see through blouses
- No mini-skirts
- Professional clothing should properly fit
- Appropriate undergarments must be worn
- Facial jewelry, such as eyebrow rings, nose rings, lip rings, and tongue studs, is not professionally appropriate and must not be worn at public events
- Clothing or accessories must not have advertisements for mind-altering or illegal substances, offensive or abusive language, sexual connotations, or violent bizarre content
- Offensive body odor and poor personal hygiene is not acceptable
- Visible excessive tattoos and similar body art must be covered during public events

2.7 Timesheets

Individual volunteers are responsible for documenting their time served in the volunteer binder or volunteer sheet at the worksite. Timesheets are collected at the end of each month. At the beginning of each month, volunteers are to begin a new timesheet.

Volunteer Recruitment and Selection

3.1 Position Descriptions *(Please View Detailed Volunteer Positions)*

The volunteer staff, just as paid staff, requires a clear, complete, and current description of the duties and responsibilities of the position which they are expected to fill. Prior to any volunteer assignment or recruitment effort, a position must be developed for each volunteer position. This position will be given to each accepted volunteer and utilized in subsequent management and evaluation efforts. Position descriptions should be reviewed and updated whenever the work involved in the position changes substantially.

All position descriptions shall include a description of the purpose and duties of the position, a designated supervisor and worksite, a timeframe for the performance of the job, a listing of job qualifications, and a description of job benefits. The Volunteer Management Department is available to assist staff in the development of volunteer job and position descriptions.

3.2 Recruitment

Volunteers shall be recruited by the agency on a pro-active basis, which the intent of broadening and expanding the volunteer involvement of the community. Volunteers shall be recruited without regard to gender, handicap, age, race, or other condition. The sole qualification for volunteer recruitment shall be suitability to perform a task on behalf of the agency. Volunteers may be recruited through either an interest in specific functions or through a general interest in volunteering which will later be matched with a specific function.

3.3 Interviewing

Prior to being assigned or appointed to a position, all volunteers will be interviewed to ascertain their suitability for an interest in that position. The interview should determine the qualifications of the volunteer, their commitment to fulfill the requirements of the position, and should answer any questions that the volunteer might have about the position. Interviews may be conducted either in person or by other means.

3.4 Criminal Records Check

As appropriate for the protection of clients, all volunteers will be asked to submit to a background criminal check. Volunteers who do not agree to the background check may be refused assignment.

3.5 Placement with Clients

Where volunteers are to be placed in direct contact with clients, additional screening procedures may be instituted. These procedures may include reference checks, direct background investigation, criminal investigation, etc. Volunteers who refuse permission for conduct of these checks will not be accepted for placement with clients.

3.6 Placement

In placing a volunteer in a position, attention shall be paid to the interests and capabilities of the volunteer and to the requirements of the volunteer position. No placement shall be made unless the requirements of both the volunteer and the supervising staff can be met: no volunteer should be assigned to a "make-up-work" position and no position should be given to an unqualified or uninterested volunteer.

3.7 Staff

Participation in interviewing and placement wherever possible, staff who will be working with the volunteer should participate in the design and conduct of the interview. Final assignment of a potential volunteer should not take place without review and approval of appropriate staff with whom the volunteer will be working.

3.8 Re-assignment

Volunteers who are at any time re-assigned to a new position shall be interviewed for that position and shall receive all appropriate orientation and training for that position before they begin work. In addition, any screening procedures appropriate for the specific position must be completed, even if the volunteer has already been working with the agency.

Volunteer Training and Development

4.1 Orientation

All volunteers will receive a general orientation on the nature and purpose of the agency, an orientation on the nature and operation of the program and activities for which they are recruited, and a specific orientation on the purposes and requirements of the position which they are accepting in that effort.

4.2 On the job Training

Volunteers will receive specific on-the-job training to provide them with the information and skills necessary to perform their volunteer assignment. The timing and methods for delivery of such training should be appropriate to the complexity and demands of the position and the capabilities of the volunteer.

4.3 Staff Involvement in Orientation and Training

Staff members with responsibility over delivery of services should have an active role in the design and delivery of both orientation and training of volunteers. Those staff that will be in a supervisory capacity to volunteers shall have primary responsibility for design and delivery of on-the-job training to volunteers assigned to them.

4.4 Volunteer Involvement in Orientation and Training

Experienced volunteers should be included in the design and delivery of volunteer orientation and training.

4.5 Continuing Education

Just as staff, volunteers should attempt to improve their levels of skill during their terms of service. Additional training and educational opportunities should be made available to volunteers during their connection with the agency. This continuing education may include both additional information on performance of their current volunteer assignment as well as more general information, and might be provided either by the agency or by assisting the volunteer to participate in educational programs by other groups.

Volunteer Supervision and Evaluation

5.1 Requirement of a Supervisor

Each volunteer who is accepted to a position with the agency must have a clearly identified supervisor who is responsible for direct management of that volunteer. This supervisor shall be responsible for day-to-day management and guidance of the work of the volunteer, and shall be available to the volunteer for consultation and assistance.

5.2 Volunteer/Staff Relationships

Volunteers and staff are considered to be partners in implementing the mission and programs of the agency, with each having an equal but complementary role to play. It is essential for the proper operation of this relationship that each partner understands and respects the needs and abilities of the other.

5.3 Acceptance of Volunteers by Staff

Since individual staff is in a better position to determine the requirements of their work and their own abilities, no volunteer will be assigned to work with a staff person without the consent of that staff person. Since volunteers are considered a valuable resource in performing the agency's work, staff are encouraged to seriously consider creative ways in which volunteers might be of service and to consult with the Volunteer Management Department if they feel in need of assistance or additional training.

5.4 Staff Involvement in Volunteer Evaluation

Affected staff should be involved in an evaluation and work assignments of volunteers with whom they are connected.

5.5 Lines of Communication

Volunteers are entitled to all necessary information pertinent to the performance of their work assignments.

Accordingly, volunteers should be included in and have access to all appropriate memos, material, and meetings relevant to the work assignments. To facilitate the receipt of this information on a timely basis, volunteers should be included on all distribution schedules. Primary responsibility for ensuring that the volunteer receives such information will rest with the direct supervisor of the volunteer.

Lines of communication should operate in both directions, and should exist both formally and informally.

Volunteers should be consulted regarding all decisions which would substantially affect the performance of their duties.

5.6 Absenteeism

Volunteers are expected to perform their duties on a regular scheduled and timely basis. If expecting to be absent from a scheduled duty, volunteers are required to make a reasonable effort to find a replacement. A reasonable effort is defined as contacted at least three other volunteers. After making a reasonable effort and at least 24 hours in advance (if possible) the volunteer is required to contact the Program Coordinator who will then take responsibility for the absence.

If a volunteer does not contact the Program Coordinator regarding their absence or if they do not make a reasonable effort to find a replacement, disciplinary action will be taken. If a volunteer's absences are found to be excessive, the volunteer may be terminated. If a volunteer is absent without contact three times, they will be subject to a special evaluation that will result in either disciplinary action or termination. ** Will be reviewed by Program Coordinator in terms of case by case situations **

5.7 Evaluations

Volunteers shall receive periodic evaluations to review their work. The evaluation session is utilized to review the performance of the volunteer, to suggest any changes in work style, to seek suggestions from the volunteer on means of enhancing the volunteer's relationship with the agency, to convey appreciation to the volunteer, and to ascertain the continued interest of the volunteer in serving in that position. Evaluations should include both an examination of the volunteer's performance of position responsibilities and a discussion of any suggestions that the volunteer may have concerning the position or project with which the volunteer is connected.

The evaluation session is an opportunity for both the volunteer and the agency to examine and improve their relationship.

5.8 Dismissal of a Volunteer

Volunteer who do not adhere to the rules and procedure of the agency or who fail to satisfactorily perform their volunteer assignment are subject to dismissal. No volunteer will be terminated until the volunteer has had an opportunity to discuss the reasons for possible dismissal with supervisory staff.

Possible grounds for dismissal may include, but are not limited to:

- Theft or inappropriate removal or possession of property belonging to First Step
- Falsification of timekeeping records
- Working under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs
- Possession, distribution, sale, transfer, or use of alcohol or illegal drugs at the workplace, while on duty or while operating First Step vehicles or equipment
- Fighting or threatening violence
- Boisterous or disruptive activity
- Insubordination or other disrespectful conduct
- Violation of safety or health rules
- Smoking in prohibited areas
- Sexual or other unlawful or unwelcome harassment
- Possession of dangerous or unauthorized materials, such as explosives or firearms at the workplace
- Excessive absenteeism
- Unauthorized disclosure of business confidential information
- Violation of personnel policies
- Unsatisfactory performance

5.9 Notice of Departure or Re-Assignment of a Volunteer

In the event that a volunteer departs the agency whether voluntarily or involuntarily, or is re-assigned to a new position, it shall be the responsibility of the Volunteer Management Department to inform those affected that the volunteer is no longer assigned to work with them. In cases of dismissal for cause, this notification should be given in writing and should clearly indicate that any further contact with the volunteer is outside any scope of relationship with the agency.

5.10 Resignation

Volunteers may resign from their volunteer service with the agency at any time. It is requested that volunteers who intend to resign provide advance notice of their departure and a reason for their decision.

5.11 Exit Interviews

Exit interviews, where possible should be conducted with volunteers who are leaving their positions. The interview should ascertain why the volunteer is leaving the position, suggestions the volunteer may have to improving the position, and the possibility of involving the volunteer in some other capacity with the agency.

Volunteer Support and Recognition

Volunteer Appreciation

6.1 Recognition

An annual volunteer recognition event will be conducted to highlight and reward the contribution of volunteers to the agency. Volunteers will be consulted and involved in order to develop an appropriate format for the event.

6.2 Informal Recognition

All staff and volunteers responsible for volunteer supervision are encouraged to undertake on-going methods of recognition of volunteer service on a regular basis throughout the year. These methods of informal recognition should range from a simple "thank you" to a concerted effort to include volunteers as full participants in program decision making and implementation.

6.3 Volunteer Career Paths

Volunteers are encouraged to grow and develop their skills while serving with the agency and are to be assisted through promotion to new volunteer jobs to assume additional and greater responsibilities. If so desired by the volunteer, the agency should assist the volunteer in maintaining appropriate records of volunteer experience that would assist the volunteer in future career opportunities, both paid and volunteer.

Volunteer Client Relations

7.1 Clients' Bill of Rights:

As a part of your orientation, it is important that you read carefully and understand the *Clients' "Bill of Rights."*

Clients' Bill of Rights

1. To be in a respectful and nurturing environment, free from abuse and exploitation and to be treated with dignity by staff, volunteers and board members of this organization.
2. To be provided services and given respectful treatment without regard to race, creed, color, sex, age, sexual orientation, handicap, illness, national origin or religion.
3. To have privacy and confidentiality respected, except when the information to be disclosed is subject to mandatory reporting required by law or regulations.
4. To be informed of the program rules and regulations before participation and to refuse First Step services.
5. To have the clients' interests and self-determination recognized as our primary responsibility.
6. To have advocacy and other services provided without attributing blame.
7. To receive information about available services and to participate in the development of a service and safety plan.
8. To have any research fully explained, and to refuse participation in research of any kind.
9. To make a complaint to First Step, the Health and Human Services Commission, or the Texas Department on Criminal Justice of the Governor's office at any time and to be provided with information forms and addresses to make the report. Any complaints made will be treated with the utmost privacy and professionalism, and no First Step employee or client will be disciplined or terminated because of any actions such as these.

7.2 Client Relations

Victims of family violence as defined in the Human Resources Code, Chapter 51, and adults subjected to sexual and/or emotional abuse by their batterers are eligible for services at the center.

7.3 Denial of Services

This policy will apply equally to all people; and is in compliance with laws and regulations as described in Family Violence Program Rule 379.606.

10. First Step will deny services to victims who are not victims of family violence as defined in the Human Resources Code, Chapter 51.
11. Any behavior that threatens the safety and security of shelter staff and residents.
12. Anyone who demonstrates violent and/or abusive behavior towards others or has a documented history with First Step yielding termination due to violent and/or abusive behavior.

First Step of Wichita Falls, Inc. Conflict of Interest Policy

The purpose of this conflict of interest policy is to prevent the institutional or personal interests of FIRST STEP OF WICHITA FALLS, INC. Board members, officers, volunteers, staff and close relatives, from interfering with the performance of their duties to FIRST STEP OF WICHITA FALLS, INC., and to ensure that there is no personal, professional, or political gain at the expense of FIRST STEP OF WICHITA FALLS, INC. This policy is not designed to eliminate relationships and activities that may create a duality of interest, but to require the disclosure of any conflicts of interest and the recusal of any interested party in a decision relating thereto.

A conflict of interest may exist when the interests or political interests of the director, officer, or staff member, volunteer, or that person's close relative, or any individual, group, or organization to which the person associated with FIRST STEP OF WICHITA FALLS, INC. has allegiance, may be seen as competing with the interests of FIRST STEP OF WICHITA FALLS, INC., or may impair such person's independence or loyalty to FIRST STEP OF WICHITA FALLS, INC. A conflict of interest is defined as an interest that might affect, or might reasonably appear to affect, the judgment or conduct of any director, officer, staff member, volunteer or close relatives, in a manner that is adverse to the interests of FIRST STEP OF WICHITA FALLS, INC.

Examples:

A conflict of interest may exist if a director, officer, staff member, volunteer or close relative:

- Has a business or financial interest in any third party dealing with FIRST STEP OF WICHITA FALLS, INC. This does not include ownership interest of less than 5 percent of outstanding securities of public corporations.
- Holds office, serves on a board, participates in management, or is employed by any third party dealing with FIRST STEP OF WICHITA FALLS, INC.
- Derives remuneration or other financial gain from a transaction involving FIRST STEP OF WICHITA FALLS, INC. (other than salary reported on a W-2 or W-9 or salary and benefits expressly authorized by the board).
- Receives gifts from any third party on the basis of his or her position with FIRST STEP OF WICHITA FALLS, INC. (other than occasional gifts valued at no more than \$50, the gift is made available in a team space or common area for others to share – e.g., fruit baskets, boxes of candy). All other gifts should be returned to the donor with the explanation that FIRST STEP OF WICHITA FALLS, INC. policy does not permit the acceptance of gifts. No personal gift of money should ever be accepted.
- Engages in any outside employment or other activity that will materially encroach on such person's obligations to FIRST STEP OF WICHITA FALLS, INC.; complete with FIRST STEP OF WICHITA FALLS, INC.'s equipment, supplies, or facilities; or imply FIRST STEP OF WICHITA FALLS, INC.'s sponsorship or support of the outside employment or activity

Use of Information

Directors, officers, volunteers, staff and close relatives. shall not use information received from participation in FIRST STEP OF WICHITA FALLS, INC. affairs, whether expressly denominated as confidential or not, for personal gain or to the detriment of FIRST STEP OF WICHITA FALLS, INC.

Disclosure and Recusal

Whenever any staff member or volunteer has a conflict of interest or a perceived conflict of interest with FIRST STEP OF WICHITA FALLS, INC., he or she shall notify the Executive Director of such conflict in writing.

When any conflict of interest is relevant to a matter that comes under consideration or requires action by the board, or a board committee, the interested person shall call it to the attention of the board chair and shall not be present during board or committee discussion or decision on the matter. However, that person shall provide the board or applicable committee with any and all relevant information on the particular matter.

The minutes of the meeting of the board or its committee shall reflect that the conflict of interest was disclosed, that the interested person was not present during discussion or decision on the matter and did not vote.

Dissemination

A copy of this conflict of interest policy shall be furnished to each director, officer, volunteer or staff member who is presently serving this organization or who may become associated with it.

Certification

The policy and its application shall be reviewed annually for the information and guidance of directors, officers, and staff members, each of whom has continuing responsibility to scrutinize their transactions and outside business interests and relationships for potential conflicts of interest, and make such disclosures as described in this policy.

As administered by the chief executive, each director, staff member and volunteer will be asked to complete a certification of agreement with the policy and disclosure of any known conflicts of interest upon his or her service to or employment with the organization annually thereafter. As administered by the employee in charge of human resources, each senior staff member will be asked to complete such a certification upon his or her employment and on an annual basis thereafter. All certifications shall be reviewed by the board as appropriate.

By signing below, I acknowledge that I have read and understood this policy. I further certify my agreement with, and commitment to comply with, all its terms and conditions.

Employee, Board Member or Volunteer

Signature

Date

Print Name

First Step Staff

Signature

Date

Print Name

First Step, Inc.

Volunteer Agreement and Privilege Recognition

The well-being of the client is foremost to the staff at First Step. For this reason, we ask you to adhere to the following policies and procedures.

By signing this document I, _____,
(Please print clearly.)

state that I will comply to First Step, Inc. policy and procedures and as follows. I fully understand that I *cannot* provide any services to the First Step, Inc. shelter, Family Store or administrative offices or any property of First Step, Inc. if I have been a party to a domestic violence or sexual assault incidence. This includes an incidence a person I have or had contact with has had to seek First Step, Inc. shelter, medical or legal services due to the same. _____ **(please initial)**

I state that I have not been arrested or convicted of an offense of family violence or sexual assault. _____ **(please initial)**

I fully understand that any and all information received, either verbally, written, seen, overheard, or through case records must be kept in the strictest confidence in accordance with FVPSA, VAWA, Chapter 51 of the Human Resources Code, and Chapter 420 of the Government Code. In addition, I will maintain and protect the clients' right to privilege according to Chapter 93 of the Texas Family Code. I also agree that the location of the First Step shelter is not to be disclosed and client privilege must be maintained while providing any service at First Step, and after I have separated from First Step, Inc. I also understand any violation of client privilege is against the law, and may result in legal action. _____ **(please initial)**.

Volunteers cannot "drop in" at any time at the shelter. For entrance to the shelter, you must make prior arrangements with the Shelter Manager. No one is to enter the shelter without his/her authorization. If you receive authorization and the staff member questions your visit please be patient while they verify your visit. Due to the nature of this business your understanding and patience is appreciated. _____ **(please initial)**

Thank you for your understanding and patience in this matter.

Volunteer/Intern Signature

Date

Program Coordinator Signature

Date

Volunteer Handbook Agreement

I acknowledge that I have received a paper/electronic copy of the Volunteer Handbook. I have read the Volunteer Handbook stated policies and by signing, I agree to abide by the policies in regards to First Step, Incorporated, its employees, and its affiliates.

Volunteer

Date

Program Coordinator

Date

