

# General Hosting Policies and Procedures

## 1. The Logbook

Each host congregation will have a **logbook** to record important information. It contains a copy of all of the volunteer guidelines, job descriptions, and sign-in sheets to record volunteer hours. (Accurate volunteer hours are required by some of the grants used by WIHN as well as White Plains UMC apportionments.) **ALL VOLUNTEERS** need to record their hours on the time sheets and should review the guidelines.

In addition to the guidelines, there is information on the guests like name, age, medication/health needs, and allergies to assist you to know the guests better. The emergency contact information for Day Center Staff, church address and phone number, and primary coordinator contact information is listed in the front. There are incident report forms to be filled out when problems arise. Please note any curfew violations, disruptive/destructive behavior problems, etc. on these pages and inform a primary coordinator as soon as possible. The primary coordinator will help with the paper work and will contact the Day Center as needed.

The logbook also contains other information such as where to find ice, how to turn on the heat, etc as well as keys to the church. Please leave this book in the host room and **DO NOT** show it to the guests. **DO NOT** give out any of the emergency contact information/ Day Center on-call staff phone numbers to guests for **any reason** unless instructed to do so by Day Center staff. The guests have been instructed to ask for on-call numbers in cases of true emergency only. Please call a primary coordinator if you find you need to contact the Day Center staff after hours for **any reason**.

It is recommended that incoming volunteers meet in the female host room with one of the volunteers they are relieving to discuss any important information, such as one parent is at work and will need a meal when he/she arrives.

## 2. Confidentiality and Privacy

It is WHIN policy that all information obtained from or concerning guests is privileged communication. **It is not appropriate or acceptable for volunteers to divulge information about a guest to any outside sources, without the specific permission of a guest.** It is natural to want to discuss situations you may encounter while volunteering. But volunteers **MUST** avoid talking about or naming guests, even in the strictest confidence. The guests' right to privacy must be preserved and respected.

Remember to knock at a guest's bedroom door before entering. Some guests will like to socialize and others will want to retreat to the quiet and privacy of their rooms.

### 3. Medications and Medical Needs

When guests first arrive in the network, the primary coordinator will be aware of any meds the guests may be taking or allergies they may have. These will also be printed on the information sheets in the logbook. Refrigerated meds are to be placed in a cooler for the guest to leave in their room to prevent other children from poisoning. This procedure is to safeguard children and other guests. A guest must ask for the medication when he or she needs it. Hosts are not responsible for dispensing any drugs or medication. A First-Aid Kit is on hand at all times and should include analgesics (safely stored) for adults and children in the female host room. Because of possible allergies, hosts should never recommend any medicine; guests must make their own decisions. Instead, offer them the choices available and let them choose.

### 4. Medical Emergencies and 911 Calls

If you feel a guest is having a medical emergency, please call 911. **Any time a person is having trouble breathing and in distress, it is considered a true emergency, will be covered by any form of insurance and should be called to 911 IMMEDIATELY!** An asthmatic may have an emergency inhaler and they should use it at this time. However, if it is not present or is not working please call 911 anyway.

If you suspect a heart attack or stroke, it is also appropriate to call 911. **High fever, severe stomach pain, etc. are not considered immediate, life-threatening emergencies and even though, the person will need to go to an emergency room for treatment, an ambulance trip would not be covered by insurance.**

**When a person from a family goes to the ER, it is WIHN policy that the entire family must go as well.** Therefore, the Day Center staff must be notified **immediately** to help coordinate care of the family. The name and number for the Day Center on-call staff member is on the guest information sheet in the front of the logbook. The phone numbers for the White Plains coordinators and address of the church to give EMS is also in the front of the logbook. Please contact a White Plains coordinator to inform them of the situation as well. **If you are unsure what to do at anytime, PLEASE call one of the White Plains Coordinators for help.**

### 5. Bad Weather Policy

WIHN operates under the Wake County School System decisions, therefore if schools close early/are delayed, the Day Center will also close early/delay opening. In such cases you will have continued contact from Day Center Staff and the Primary Coordinators until the families are safely at their destination. Please call the primary coordinator any time you have questions about our facility during bad weather.

# Volunteer-Guest Relationship Guidelines

## 1. Showing Hospitality

Please learn the names of the guests and call them by name. Almost everyone responds well when called by name. You can wear a name tag which is provided in the female host room with the logbook to help the guests get to know you. (Remember the guests meet several different volunteers every day.)

## 2. Demonstrating Empathy

The most important thing we can do to show empathy and caring is to listen. **Just listen.** Even though our guests are facing many complex problems, often they are seeking someone who will listen and not offer advice or solutions to their problems.

Be understanding, but please **DO NOT** ask personal, probing questions. If a guest does open up to you, treat them as a friend and ask appropriate questions that will help you better understand their situation. Please show a caring concern for our guests, this often enhances the hope and self-esteem of people and can empower them to deal more effectively with their problems. Try not to feel frustrated and helpless, we are not professional problem solvers, and there are some problems that even professionals cannot solve. Remember the problems in your private prayers and offer them a chance to make an appointment with our ministers or Stephens ministers. If they wish it, contact one of the primary coordinators to help arrange this.

Avoid labeling people. Labels create barriers and are counter-productive to our program. Keep in mind that these families are our guests, not "the homeless". Evaluate yourself. We all have stereotypes and prejudices; please do not let them become barriers. Avoid any tendency to judge, criticize, or stereotype. Remember to treat adult guests like adults not as dependent children.

## 3. Gratitude

Do not expect gratitude for your services. Most will show gratitude and others may not, but please treat **ALL** guests with courtesy, dignity, and respect. We must remember not to take things personally; typically any anger or hostility shown by guests is misdirected. Remember that our guests are individuals and will have good and bad days. Please overlook occasional outbursts without judging or feeling that they are ungrateful. (Serious disruptive behavior should be reported to the primary coordinator and recorded in the logbook.)

#### 4. Encouraging Independence

One of the WIHN program's goals is to help the families become self-sufficient. Please avoid doing things for them such as picking them up from work when they can use other transportation. (This could only be a temporary fix and the family would need to make new arrangements at the next congregation.) **The Day Center can provide funds for basic car repairs, gas money, and bus passes which are given on a case by case basis.**

Also avoid giving donations of money, clothes, etc. to the guests especially if it has not been cleared through Day Center staff. WIHN tries to coordinate donations through the Day Center and disperse them fairly. When guests begin receiving items from the volunteers it is likely that one person or family will be seen as a "favorite" or will in fact be receiving far more than the others. **The Day Center has a clothes closet including a career section for dress interview clothes which the guests can request.** The Day Center also has other resources to help guests get what they need. If you still feel moved to help a guest, consider a donation to the Day Center for one of the funds mentioned above and many more guests can be helped.

#### 5. Spiritual Nurturing

Brief prayers may be offered before meals are served if the volunteers wish. Please keep in mind that a guest can choose not to participate.

**Although many individuals volunteer to host because of a spiritual calling, the temptation to discuss personal religious beliefs with guests is inappropriate and should be avoided unless the guest initiates the conversation.** Congregation members may certainly invite guests to worship services or activities. Remember that any necessary transportation for the family will need to be provided by the congregation, if they choose to attend. Of course, we should understand and respect their right not to attend, if they so choose.

#### 6. Parenting Issues

**Many congregations report that occupying children with appropriate activities is one of the most helpful things they can do for adults who need time to concentrate on their own problems.** Guests may be tired and discouraged, and all parents need a break from the responsibilities of parenting. Volunteers can help by being available to play with and enjoy the guest's children. Church youth may be especially successful at engaging children in appropriate activities. **Volunteers should always ask parent's permission before giving things to children or involving them in an activity.**

**Children are not allowed to be in a room by themselves regardless of age. The only exception is when a young child is sleeping in the family bedroom.**

**For legal reasons, DO NOT take a child to the bathroom by yourself. Instead, offer to watch the other children while a guest parent takes the child to the bathroom.**

If a child (being supervised by a parent) makes a mess in the TV room or other area and the parent does not ask the child to clean it up, **DO NOT** do it yourself. Ask the parent to clean it. The guests are asked by WIHN to be responsible for their children and clean up after themselves.

**Parents are responsible for the care of their children while in the network. However, hosts should intervene if a child's behavior becomes injurious to others or is destructive to the congregation's property.** In all other cases, volunteers must respect the parent's right to parent, even if it is inconsistent with their own view of good parenting behavior. An exception to this is in the case of suspected or witnessed child abuse. To protect children, the law mandates that child abuse be reported to the state agency which handles abuse investigations. If a volunteer suspects abuse, the primary coordinator must be contacted to provide guidance.

Finally, it is important to remember that we must also have **volunteer children follow the same guidelines as guest children.** This prevents confusion and promotes fairness to our guests.