



Volunteer Handbook

WHO WE ARE

The House of Mercy is a Catholic based non-profit organization located in Manassas, Virginia. Founded by the Missionaries of Our Lady of Divine Mercy on January 6, 2005, the ministry is dedicated to serving the poor, marginalized, and forgotten by sharing the message of God's mercy with them. Using the physical and spiritual works of mercy as a foundation, volunteers strive to serve the poor using their God-given gifts and the sacrifice of their time as instruments of the Holy Spirit.

Feeding the hungry is the primary mission of the House of Mercy, although our outreach is constantly expanding to serve anyone in physical or spiritual need. From our food pantry to meal packing events, families receive love, compassion and aid. Keeping always in mind that poverty has no boundaries, the ministry is open to those suffering from hardship in our own community and beyond.

The Missionaries of Our Lady of Divine Mercy began as a small prayer group meeting in the members' houses, where they prayed the Rosary, read Sacred Scripture, and read from the Diary of Saint Faustina. Now we are known as the House of Mercy, and have become an organization dedicated to serving those in material and spiritual need.

The House of Mercy is meant to be a refuge of mercy and grace for all. Everyone is most welcome at the House of Mercy. The goal of the House of Mercy is to bring people together to do something beautiful for God while making God's love visible everyday.

Important House of Mercy Information

Phone Numbers:

House of Mercy Phone Number (703) 659-1636

Staff:

Jessica Root, Executive Director	jroot@houseofmercyva.org
Felice Hilton, Assistant Director	fhilton@houseofmercyva.org
Von Barron, Store/Donation Ctr. Manager	vbarron@houseofmercyva.org
Clelia Vargas, Food Pantry Manager	foodpantry@houseofmercyva.org
Tamara Halstead, Donation Ctr. Coordinator	thalstead@houseofmercyva.org
Eric Sommers, Donation Ctr. Coordinator	esommers@houseofmercyva.org
Fr. Francis Peffley, Spiritual Director	

Food Pantry Hours of Operation:

Monday - Friday: 10:00AM—4:00PM

Thrift Store and Donation Center Hours of Operation:

Monday - Saturday: 10:00AM – 5:00PM

Website: www.houseofmercyva.org

Address: 8170 Flannery Ct. Manassas, VA 20109

This handbook will provide you with the general policies and practices of The House of Mercy. You are encouraged to familiarize yourself with the contents of this handbook, as it will answer many common questions concerning your volunteering. To retain necessary flexibility in the administration of policies and procedures, The House of Mercy reserves the right to change, add to, or eliminate any of the policies described in this handbook.

House of Mercy Volunteer Mission

- Volunteers at the House of Mercy are considered missionaries proclaiming the Good News of Jesus Christ and spreading the message of God’s love, mercy and salvation.
- Volunteers are expected to be compassionate, engaging, and warm to all who pass through our doors. We must not judge one another, especially our clients and fellow volunteers. Everyone needs a chance and a place to be successful.
- Words cannot adequately express our appreciation for your sacrifice of time and commitment to this ministry. Without you, the words of mercy would be silent.

House of Mercy Volunteer Conduct

- We are living examples of Christ. Please exercise self-awareness of your conduct at all times.
- Reliability is essential for the success of our ministry. If you are unable to work your shift, please alert the appropriate House of Mercy manager as soon as you are aware of the situation.
- Due to the professional atmosphere of the House of Mercy, volunteers are asked to leave their children at home during their shift.
- Although our dress is “business casual”, we ask all volunteers to dress modestly and in accordance with the Dress Code.
- Except in emergency, please do not use cell phones, iPods, or other personal electronics during your volunteer shift.
- Computers may not to be used for surfing the internet or accessing personal networking sites.
- For security reasons, please do not bring personal belongings to the House of Mercy.

- The use of tobacco products, alcohol and recreational drugs is not permitted within the HOM facilities, nor in the surrounding areas. If you are under the influence of drugs or alcohol, you will be asked to leave.

House of Mercy Volunteer Details

- Each volunteer shift will vary in length based on the area in which you are working. The minimum shift is generally two hours. Please stay for your entire shift.
- The offices are for staff and authorized volunteers only. Clients and the public are allowed only in public access areas.
- If a conflict should arise, please contact a House of Mercy supervisor. That person will take the issue “offline” if necessary.
- We are unable to offer free clothing or food to volunteers unless they fill out the “Application for Emergency Assistance” and qualify for the House of Mercy assistance program. Any volunteer taking items that are not given through proper aid procedures will be dismissed.
- All program assistance must be processed formally, through official House of Mercy procedures. Volunteers are not to give any direct aid to clients or to volunteers.
- Volunteers must wear House of Mercy lanyard and I.D. badge at all times, these will be issued during the volunteer’s first shift.
- Thrift Store volunteers will be required to wear designated apron during their shift.
- At the beginning of your shift, please sign in using the computer log-in program, sign out when you leave. This information is gathered for grant-writing and auditing purposes.
- Volunteers are encouraged to purchase from the Thrift Stores! All purchases directly support the ministry. Please wait for items to be displayed in the store before purchasing them. New items received in the donation center are not for sale until they are priced and displayed. No “I.O.U.”s are permitted in place of cash, and no “holding” of items. These standards apply to customers, as well.
- A client may approach you at anytime, regardless of your volunteer duty. Please be respectful and helpful in your communication and take them to the appropriate staff member for assistance.

- Volunteers may park in the House of Mercy parking lot in the front or side lots. Spots directly in front of the Donation Center and Thrift store are reserved for customers and donors. The back of the building is reserved for deliveries only.

House of Mercy Volunteer Dress Code

All House of Mercy volunteers must abide by the House of Mercy dress code. Please dress conservatively.

- Volunteers must dress modestly and appropriately. This includes wearing: Blue, black, or khaki pants, jeans, and shorts (knee length only); short or long sleeve shirts, blouse, or appropriate t-shirt (no graphics); black, gray, white, red or khaki sweater/sweatshirt.
- Crop tops (showing midriff), tight tank tops and provocative clothing are not appropriate. You may be asked to return home to change clothing.

House of Mercy Customer Service Guidelines

Phone Script:

“Hello, House of Mercy, this is (Your name), how may I help you?”

- More detailed scripts for frequently asked questions will be available in a separate document. Please put someone on hold and find the correct answer before responding if you do not already know the answer.

Donation Center:

“Hello, thank you so much for your donation, can I help you with that? Where did you hear about us? Would you like a receipt? We really appreciate it! Have a blessed day!”

“We will start taking Halloween/thanksgiving/Christmas donations in October. We are glad to take what you have today, but just letting you know for next time. Unfortunately, we don’t have the space to store those donations for the next few months. Thank you so much for thinking of us, though! We hope to see you in October (if not before!).”

“I’m sorry, we cannot accept ...(car seats b/c of safety issue) (mattresses b/c of cleanliness issue) (technology b/c of personal information and up to date issue), etc.

There is really no good place to donate that, but the dump is around the corner (give directions) OR Salvation Army/Goodwill/Habitat Restore will probably take it, they are located (give directions). Thank you so much for thinking of us and we're sorry we couldn't take that today."

Thrift Store:

"Hello! Welcome to House of Mercy! Let me know if you need help with anything."

House of Mercy Policies

Anti-Discrimination Policy

Although the House of Mercy is a Catholic based organization, we welcome people of all faiths to serve in our ministry. It is the policy of the House of Mercy not to discriminate against anyone based on race, religion, nationality, disability or any other characteristic. We do require all volunteers to support the mission and vision of the House of Mercy, and to be in basic agreement with the Roman Catholic Christian church doctrine.

The House of Mercy is firmly committed to providing a positive work environment free of discrimination and bias. Each volunteer is personally responsible for maintaining such a work environment. The House of Mercy prohibits any actions, words, jokes, or comments based on an individual's race, sex, sexual preferences, ethnic background, age, religion, physical condition, or other legally protected characteristic. Any conduct or action, whether overt or subtle, which creates an offensive or hostile work environment is prohibited and will be grounds for immediate disciplinary action. The House of Mercy prohibits any harassment between volunteers, employees, or other non-employee on the basis of sex. No volunteer, male or female, should be subjected to unsolicited or unwelcome sexual overtones and conduct, either verbal or physical. Misconduct applies to males and females, and includes harassment between individuals of both sexes and the same sex. Any volunteer who believes he or she is a victim of sexual or discriminatory harassment is encouraged to let the harasser know that his or her behavior is unwelcome. In addition, volunteers who believe they have been harassed must immediately report the matter to a Supervisor or the Executive Director.

Background Check Policy

All adult volunteers over the age of 18 will be subject to a background check. This policy is to ensure the safety of all involved with the House of Mercy. Due to the U.S. Privacy Act, any agency that currently has a completed background check for you is not permitted to share that information with us. There is a fee for processing the background check.

Handling Food Products

House of Mercy staff and volunteers will always wear hair nets and gloves anytime they are handling non-packaged food items. No one will handle any unpackaged food items if they have any open sores or abrasions or if they are ill (cold, cough, etc.). Everyone is to exercise proper hygiene by washing hands any time they use the bathroom facilities.

Safety

You and The House of Mercy share responsibility for establishing and maintaining a safe work environment. The House of Mercy will attempt to ensure a safe work environment and to comply with federal, state, and local safety regulations. In turn, you are expected to obey safety rules and to exercise caution in all of your work activities. You are asked to report any unsafe conditions to your supervisor immediately. Any accident, which results in injury, regardless of how insignificant, must be reported promptly to your supervisor.

First aid kits are located in the kitchen and in the warehouse. If they are needed, please inform your supervisor of the injury requiring first aid.

Confidentiality Policy

Due to the nature of service at the House of Mercy, all volunteers must sign, agree to, and follow a confidentiality policy. The policy reads:

“The House of Mercy considers it everyone’s responsibility to respect and maintain the confidentiality of clients, volunteers, visitors, and employees.

I acknowledge that, as a volunteer, I may have access to confidential information. All individually identifiable client information is considered protected information and is treated as confidential following House of Mercy’s policies and procedures. Additionally, personal employee/volunteer information such as home address, telephone numbers, and work schedules are confidential. Retrieving and/or discussing confidential information for any purpose other than required by job responsibility is prohibited and may be considered grounds for dismissal from service.

As a volunteer of the House of Mercy, I may have access to computers and paper file resources needed to perform my duties. I understand that the passwords assigned to me are confidential. I understand the information to which I have access is also confidential.

Any client or personnel records may not be taken from the premises, in any form, electronic or hard copy.

Any disclosure of such information or use of the data or computer systems for any purpose other than that required by my duties will be considered grounds for dismissal from service.”

Conviction Policy

Due to the nature of the work that goes on at the House of Mercy (working with clients, handling money, etc.), our policy is that anyone convicted of a felony will not be permitted to volunteer in a direct aid or direct contact capacity. There is always a way to help the House of Mercy with your time and talents. We will work with you to discover a way you may serve God.

Reimbursement of Expenses Policy

Only pre-approved expenses incurred for the House of Mercy will be reimbursable to volunteers. If a volunteer anticipates a need for the ministry, he or she must discuss it and get approval from the Executive Director prior to any purchase.

Holiday Policy

The House of Mercy offices are closed on the following days: the feast of Mary, Mother of God (January 1), Good Friday, Holy Saturday, Easter Sunday, Memorial Day, Independence Day, Labor Day, Thanksgiving Day, the Friday after Thanksgiving Day, Christmas Eve (December 24), Christmas Day (December 25), Day after Christmas (December 26). However, on a number of these days the Thrift Store may be open as usual. Days the facility is closed will be posted well in advance.

Inclement Weather Policy

The House of Mercy will follow the Prince William County Government or Federal Government decisions in the case of inclement weather, NOT the public school system. If either the Prince William County government or Federal government are closed due to weather, activities of the House of Mercy will be cancelled, and volunteers will not need to report for work.

However, in the event that Prince William County or Federal Government have a delayed opening, the House of Mercy will still open at its regular time and volunteers are asked to report for their regular shifts.

Volunteers are asked to ultimately use their own good judgment in conditions of inclement weather and are asked to always err on the side of safety.

Incident Reporting

An “incident” is anything outside of the norm. This would include any sort of accident, any verbal or physical altercations, any innuendo or off-color remarks, any theft, anything that seems suspicious. If at any time you are involved in or witness an incident, please bring it to the attention of the Executive or Assistant Director. Incident reports are to be filled out by anyone involved in the incident.

Thank you very much for volunteering with the House of Mercy! It is only through the wonderful service of volunteers that the House of Mercy is able to serve God and help others.