

Welcome to HomeFront: Volunteer Manual

“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, that’s the only thing that ever has.” – Margaret Mead

Nearly 30 years ago, a group of thoughtful, committed citizens sat around my kitchen table and brainstormed ideas on how we could help the families that were being warehoused in those grim “welfare” motels on the Route 1 corridor. Back then we were all volunteers working towards the same goal - to give homeless and at-risk families the resources they need to live a life of dignity.

I am proud to say that we continue to run on that same power and passion with over 1400 wonderful dedicated volunteers. The gift of your time and talents are at the heart of our ability to meet the needs of families in our community. HomeFront offers a large variety of programs and services that rely on the support of our volunteers.

It is our hope that your volunteer experience will be a great one, and we will work closely to align your interests and skills to the opportunities within our agency. One of the most important things our volunteers can do is to be advocates for our families and for our organization. Together we can break the cycle of poverty in our community.

With Deepest Gratitude,



Connie Mercer
Founder and Executive Director

Locations

HomeFront Main Office
1880 Princeton Avenue
Lawrenceville, NJ 08648
(609) 989-9417

HomeFront Family Campus
101 Celia Way
Ewing, NJ 08628
(609) 883-7500

Lawrence Community Center
295 Eggert Crossing Road
Lawrenceville, NJ 08648
(609) 883-3379

Free Store
1000 Division Street
Trenton, NJ 08611
(609) 396-7141

Key Contacts

Some names and phone numbers that might be useful to you:

Meghan Cubano.....Director of Community Engagement ... (609) 989-9417 ext. 133
Kelsey Espada..... Volunteer Coordinator @ 1880 kelseye@homefrontnj.org
Liza Peck Support Services Liaison @ HFC (609) 883-7500 ext. 315
Catherine Cozzi Volunteer Coordinator @ HFC.....(609) 883-7500 ext. 329

Hours of Operation

1880 Princeton Avenue

Monday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday 9:00 A.M. - 5:00 P.M.
Tuesday Noon - 8:00 P.M.
Saturday Closed (with exceptions)
Sunday Closed

Lawrence Community Center

Monday – Saturday Varied based on scheduled programming

HomeFront Family Campus

Monday - Friday 9:00 A.M. - 7:30 P.M.
Saturday 7:00 A.M. - 9:00 A.M. (Group Breakfast Volunteers)
Sunday Closed to Volunteers (with exceptions)

Free Store

Monday, Wednesday, Friday 9:00 A.M. - 3:00 P.M.

HomeFront Holidays

Holidays and Closure Days:

New Year's Day January 1
Martin Luther King Jr. Day Third Monday January
Presidents' Day Third Monday February
Good Friday
Memorial Day Last Monday in May
Independence Day July 4
Labor Day First Monday in September
Thanksgiving Weekend Third Thursday and Friday in November
Christmas Day December 25

In the event of program closure due to snow or other circumstances, a decision will be made by 7A.M. on the day of the closure. Volunteers should call 609-989-9417 to obtain weather closing information for their respective location.

Mission Statement

HomeFront's Mission is to end homelessness in Central New Jersey by harnessing the caring, resources and expertise of the community. We lessen the immediate pain of homelessness and help families become self-sufficient. We work to give our clients the skills and opportunities to ensure adequate incomes and we work to increase the availability of adequate, affordable housing. We help homeless families advocate for themselves individually and collectively.

Our Four Core Beliefs

We believe that families deserve safe, secure housing. On any given night, HomeFront provides shelter for approximately 450 individuals, the vast majority whom are children.

We believe that with the right tools, all families can succeed. In order for families to become—and, more importantly, remain—stable, they need the tools, skills and opportunities to keep them on track and become self-sufficient.

We believe that families need basic necessities to live a life with dignity. Faced with limited resources and a focus on surviving, the families we serve do not have the means to get basic necessities. We provide those resources to thousands of households a year through our Resource Network.

We believe that children nurtured by love and support will grow on a path to realizing life's possibilities. HomeFront began because of hungry, homeless children and children have remained at the heart of our work ever since. From intensive services at our emergency shelter to an award-winning preschool to year-round enrichment programming and more, we wrap these children in the support they need now, provide hope for a better tomorrow and open their worlds to the possibilities that await them.

Trauma Informed Care at HomeFront

HomeFront is committed to the use of Trauma-Informed Care as the foundation of all intervention used by the organization. The experience of poverty and homelessness is directly connected to trauma and those involved require very specialized services. HomeFront programs demonstrate the use of the 7 Essentials of Trauma Informed Care:

1. Understanding Trauma and its Impact
2. Facilitate Healing through Relationships
3. Growth, Change and Recovery are Possible
4. We Share Power and Decision-Making with Clients
5. Our Programs Promote Wellness, Safety and Non-Violence
6. We Practice Open Communication and Integrated Care
7. Our Programs are Culturally Competent

Please let your Program Manager know if you are interested in learning more about Trauma Informed Care.

Please visit our website www.homefrontnj.org for more information regarding our mission and programs and services.

Volunteer Guidelines and General Policies

The following information explains our policies and procedures. It will help you understand how to carry out your duties and give the best service to HomeFront and our families. It is also designed to provide you with answers to questions you may have regarding operations at HomeFront.

Thank you for the time, devotion and caring you are willing to share with our clients.

What You Can Expect as a Volunteer

As a volunteer, you can expect:

1. That you will be respected and that all volunteers will be treated with courtesy and respect.
2. To receive a clear, specific job description.
3. To be given appropriate assignments according to your skill, interests, availability and training.
4. To be trusted with confidential information if needed to carry out assignments.
5. To have your time used well during the planning and coordination of the volunteer program.
6. To discuss any problems with HomeFront staff and receive prompt attention to any concerns which may arise.
7. To be offered applicable training programs when available.
8. To experience full cooperation from HomeFront employees.

We are dedicated to providing an environment where we work as a team. You can discuss any problem or ask any question of the Program Manager or his/her designee. We encourage you to voice your opinions and contribute your suggestions to improve the quality of the volunteer program. HomeFront needs your help in making each volunteer day enjoyable and rewarding. Your experience is important to us.

Interviewing and Placement

All volunteers must be interviewed by the Volunteer Coordinator before any volunteer service begins. The interview will determine volunteer interests and skills and apprise volunteers of agency needs. When possible, the volunteer will have the final say in determining which volunteer position best fits his/her needs.

Scheduling

Because every program has varying needs, coordinating your volunteer schedule and area of interest with the respective Program Manager will be critical. Some volunteer opportunities are scheduled using online tools such as SignUpGenius while others are handled through the personal coordination with each Program Manager. Please speak with your Program Manager to determine which process you should use for scheduling.

Non-Discrimination Policy

HomeFront provides equal opportunities to all workers and volunteers without regard to race, color, sex, creed, national origin, age, marital status, sexual orientation or disability in accordance with the applicable state and local law.

Absenteeism

Volunteers shall perform their duties on a regular, scheduled basis, and timeliness is crucial to the smooth operation of our programs and services. If you expect to be absent from a scheduled duty, be sure to inform the Program Manager as far in advance as possible so that alternative arrangements may be made.

Personal Belongings

Please be aware that you are responsible for safeguarding your personal belongings. Access to a locked storage area may be provided as a courtesy. HomeFront accepts no responsibility for loss of any personal effects, including cash.

Electronic Communications

Electronic communications, including the contents of HomeFront owned computers, telephones and facsimiles are the property of HomeFront and electronic communications are subject to all the policies of HomeFront. Internet, e-mail, phone, mail, or any other communication or information system of HomeFront is not to be used in any way that may be disruptive, offensive to others, harmful to morale or in violation of HomeFront policies.

Confidentiality

As a volunteer, you will be required to sign a confidentiality pledge because you will be receiving confidential information that must be protected against any disclosure. It is the responsibility of each volunteer to safeguard confidential information in order to protect the interests of HomeFront clients, their families, our donors, our employees, our volunteers, our business partners, other visitors and interested parties. Confidential matters of HomeFront in general are of the utmost ethical importance and are affected by and, where applicable, regulated by federal and state law.

Additional Information Regarding Confidentiality

Responding to a Request for Disclosure of Confidential Information

If you are asked to release information which is confidential, an appropriate, non-committal response should be given, such as, "I'm sorry. I do not know the answer to your questions. Please see the staff manager on duty."

Answering Telephones

If your volunteer placement requires you to answer the telephone, you may be asked if a certain resident lives at the facility in order to send a message to that person. The appropriate response is, "I'm sorry. I can neither confirm nor deny whether that person lives here."

Do not offer or agree to take a message - that is an acknowledgement that the person is indeed a client. If the caller insists the person resides at HomeFront and asks to leave a message, the appropriate response is, "I am a volunteer. Please wait while I call the staff manager on duty."

Photographing/Videotaping Clients

Volunteers are prohibited from photographing, audio taping or videotaping any client or resident of HomeFront without management consent. This policy includes the use of any type of cellular phone camera, digital camera, video camera, tape recorder, or other form of image or audio recording device without management consent.

Key Communication Guidelines

As a volunteer, you agree to abide by the following guidelines regarding clients, families, donors and other agency information:

1. Client records and documents are for official use only.

- a. Copies will be made for official use only as determined by those responsible and accountable for such records.
2. Any party identifying himself or herself as “official” - including but not limited to police officers, attorneys, government employees - may not receive any information regarding clients, families, donors, employees or volunteers without approval from the Chief Information Officer or the Chief Operating Officer.

Additional Communication Guidelines:

- a. Questions about clients and families are referred to the Program Manager or designee.
- b. Questions about employees are referred to Human Resources Director.
- c. Questions about volunteers are referred to the Program Manager or Volunteer Coordinator or designee.
- d. Questions about HomeFront are referred to the Program Manager or Volunteer Coordinator or designee.
- e. Questions about donations of money, good or services for HomeFront are referred to the Director of Community Engagement.
- f. Please seek prior approval from the Chief Executive Officer or the Chief Operating Officer before speaking to members of the press about HomeFront, its employees, its volunteers, patients, families or business operations.
- g. Where language barriers between clients and volunteers exist, HomeFront encourages clients to be accompanied by their chosen translators. As an alternative, HomeFront shall make every effort to provide translators upon client request.

Volunteer Injury Procedures

Volunteers must report an injury that happens while volunteering immediately to the Program Manager. The Program Manager will complete an *Incident Report* and forward this to the Compliance Director and the Human Resources Director. The volunteer should file a claim with his/her personal medical insurance if treatment is necessary. Any additional follow up questions or concerns should go directly to the Compliance Director.

Indemnification

Volunteers agree to defend, indemnify and hold HomeFront harmless from any loss, injury or damage occurring in conjunction with volunteer services provided at the HomeFront that result from any act or omission by or negligence of the volunteer. HomeFront agrees to hold the volunteer harmless from any loss, injury or damage occurring in conjunction with the volunteer’s service as a result of any act or omission by or through negligence of HomeFront or its employees and other agents to the extent permissible and without waiving any of HomeFront’s rights under the New Jersey Charitable Immunity Act, N.J.S.A.2A:53A-7(a).

Fundraising

HomeFront is funded through donations from individuals, corporations, foundations and grants. Fundraising is vital to our programs and we are continually seeking to form new partnerships for support. If you or your group would like to assist with our fundraising efforts, please call the Director of Community Engagement at 609-989-9417, ext. 133.

Volunteer Support

You will be assigned to work with a staff member who will provide support and supervision. This support person will provide on-the-job training and serve as a direct link between you and the rest of the staff.

Age Limitation

The minimum age for volunteers is 16 years. Volunteers under the age of 18 must have the written consent of a parent or guardian before volunteering.

Volunteer Grievance Procedure

A volunteer is encouraged to speak directly with the Program Manager or Volunteer Coordinator in the event of any grievance. If requested, an appropriate senior management staff member may also address a volunteer grievance.

Interactions with Clients, Staff and Other Volunteers

We want volunteers to get to know our staff, other volunteers and clients in the programs. However, we have a few rules to adhere to that will help make your time here safe and enjoyable:

- *Do not give rides to any client in your own vehicle.
- *Do not give money or “gifts” or lend money to clients no matter how well-intended the action. Likewise, don’t accept any gifts unless authorized by your program supervisor or the Volunteer Coordinator.
- *Do not leave your belongings unattended. If you must bring valuables with you, be sure to ask your supervisor where to lock them. Never leave your purse or other valuables on the front seat of your car – even if the car is locked. HomeFront does not assume any responsibility for loss, damage or theft of any personal property including cash.
- *Do not give out cigarettes and purchase alcohol for clients under any circumstance.
- *Practice active listening and empathy. Do not make decisions for clients.
- *Report inappropriate behavior, or anything that causes you to feel uncomfortable, to your staff supervisor or to the Volunteer Coordinator immediately.
- *Always remain calm when speaking with clients. Remember that our clients are going through difficult times and their stress level may be high. That said, don’t take any negative comment made by a client personally and never allow yourself to be drawn into an argument.
- *Profanity is never acceptable when working with staff, clients or other volunteers.
- *Avoid interacting with clients if that interaction is not necessary with respect to your job or authorized by an appropriate supervisor.
- *Do not accept friend requests from clients on social media or exchange phone numbers.
- *If you see a client in public, please wait until they approach you to say hello and do not approach them first. They may not feel comfortable speaking with you outside of HomeFront.

Working with Children

- *Volunteers must not discipline the children. Volunteers should report children's disciplinary matters to the Program Manager immediately.
- *Volunteers may never be alone with a child.
- *Volunteers must never touch or hug a child in a way that might be misinterpreted. Please remember that many of our children have come from abusive backgrounds.

Child Abuse, Sexual Abuse, Physical, Mental, Or Sexual Harassment

Volunteers witnessing child abuse, sexual abuse, physical, mental, or sexual harassment must report it immediately to the Program Manager and meet any state reporting requirements.

Smoking

To accommodate those who must smoke, designated outdoor smoking areas have been established at each HomeFront location.

Background Checks

A specific criminal records background check may be required for your volunteer assignment. A volunteer must pass this check to be given an assignment working with children in some of our programs.

Reasons for Separation

Grounds for temporary and/or permanent separation from volunteer assignments may include, but are not limited to, the following: gross misconduct or insubordination, being under the influence of alcohol or drugs, theft of property or misuse of agency equipment or materials, abuse or mistreatment of clients, staff or other volunteers. Failure to meet standards of performance, failure to satisfactorily perform assigned duties and failure to abide by agency policies and procedures.

Service at the Discretion of HomeFront

HomeFront accepts the service of all volunteers with the understanding that such service is at the sole discretion of the organization. Volunteers agree that HomeFront may at any time, for whatever reason, decide to terminate the volunteer's relationship with the organization. You may at any time, for whatever reason, decide to sever your relationship with HomeFront. Notice of such a decision should be communicated as soon as possible to the Volunteer Coordinator.

Revisions

HomeFront reserves the right, at any time and without notice, to amend, revise or delete any policy or procedure referred to in this Volunteer Manual. Notifications regarding changes may be communicated to volunteers in meetings, counseling sessions or by written communications.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this manual, please call the Director of Community Engagement at 609-989-9417 x 133.

Receipt and Acknowledgement of HomeFront Volunteer Manual

The HomeFront Volunteer Manual is an important document intended to help you become acquainted with HomeFront's policies and procedures. This handbook will serve as a guide to your service as a volunteer. It is not the final word in all cases, as individual circumstances may call for individual attention.

Please read the following statements and sign below:

I have received and read HomeFront's Volunteer Manual. I understand that it is my responsibility to comply with the policies contained in this handbook and any revisions made to it. Any questions I may have concerning the material covered in this handbook may be discussed with a program supervisor or volunteer coordinator.

Volunteer's Signature

Volunteer's Name (Print)

Date

Photographic Release Form

AUTHORIZATION AND RELEASE

I hereby grant permission to HomeFront, and its officers, trustees, employees, agents, students, representatives, successors, licensees and assigns (hereinafter "HomeFront") to photograph/video my image, likeness, or depiction and/or that of my minor children (if applicable). I hereby grant permission to HomeFront to edit, crop, or retouch such photographs/video, and waive any right to inspect the final photographs/video. I hereby consent to and permit photographs/video of me and/or those of my minor children to be used by HomeFront worldwide for any purpose, including educational and advertisement purposes, and in any medium, including print and electronic. I understand that HomeFront may use such photographs/video with or without associating names thereto. I further waive any claim for compensation of any kind for HomeFront's use or publication of photographs/video of me and/or those of my minor children (if applicable).

I hereby fully and forever discharge and release HomeFront from any claim for damages of any kind (including, but not limited to, invasion of privacy; defamation; false light or misappropriation of name, likeness or image) arising out of the use or publication of photographs/video of me and/or those of my minor children (if applicable) by HomeFront, and covenant and agree not to sue or otherwise initiate legal proceedings against the HomeFront for such use or publication on my own behalf or on behalf of my minor children. All grants of permission and consent, and all covenants, agreements and understandings contained herein are irrevocable.

I acknowledge and represent that I am over the age of 18, have read this entire document, that I understand its terms and provisions, and that I have signed it knowingly and voluntarily on behalf of myself and/or my minor children (if applicable).

Signature

Date

Print Name

Print Name of Minor Child (if applicable)

Print Name of Minor Child (if applicable)

Confidentiality Pledge of Volunteers

I understand that HomeFront's work encompasses many areas of peoples' lives including the gathering, upkeep and storage of records, applications and other information that is **highly confidential**. Furthermore, the names and any other identifying facts or information about any businesses, organizations and other volunteers participating in projects or programs conducted by HomeFront are confidential information.

I understand that in carrying out its mission, HomeFront has been entrusted with private information by those for whom and with whom the agency serves. This information does not belong to HomeFront nor to me; it belongs to the people who have entrusted it to us. I am not free to share any of the content of this material or the names or any other information about the persons, units, departments or divisions to whom it belongs or about whom it is written or concerns. I understand I must not speak of this material to anyone but authorized persons and only when I am working with those persons on matters pertaining to this material. Even when working with confidential documents in an official capacity, I understand I must not speak of them or leave them in areas where unauthorized persons may overhear related discussions or read these materials. It is not OK for me to discuss this material with anyone during lunch or breaks, nor is it acceptable to speak about them at home or elsewhere with my family and friends. I understand how important it is that I not reveal such confidential information, regardless of how or where I acquired it, to any person unless he/she has been authorized by the person in question to have access to the information.

I further understand that the unauthorized access to, use, or disclosure of any confidential information is a breach of the terms of my voluntary service and may subject me to court action by any interested party or to other sanctions by HomeFront. I acknowledge that this pledge shall continue to bind me even after my voluntary service is completed.

Other than in the course of my service, I agree I will not use, nor facilitate the use by any third party in any way, any information deemed confidential by the terms of a contract or other written agreement between HomeFront and any other organization, except by written authorization by both parties. It is my understanding that HomeFront and the contracting organization(s) have the exclusive right to all information acquired or developed under such a contract or other written agreement. I acknowledge that I acquire no right, title, or interest in any data or information to which I have access by reason of my voluntary service and that I may not remove such data from my assigned service location.

I agree to promptly notify HomeFront of any unauthorized disclosure, use or alteration of confidential information that I observe.

Nothing herein shall be construed to prevent divulgence of information to any court or governmental agency, provided such divulgence is required by law. However, if I am subpoenaed, or if I have reason to believe that I may be called upon to make such divulgence, I agree to notify HomeFront and the person in question promptly in writing and, upon their request, to cooperate in all lawful efforts to resist such divulgence.

By signing below, I affirm my pledge to this confidentiality policy of HomeFront.

Print Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____