



Visitation House
A LOVING MATERNITY HOME

Volunteer Policy and Procedures Handbook

VISITATION HOUSE, INC
REVISED 04/2025



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Welcome

Welcome and thank you for your interest in becoming a volunteer with Visitation House. We hope that you will find volunteering with us an enjoyable and rewarding experience.

Your generous gifts of time, energy, special skills and expertise are deeply appreciated. As a volunteer, you will be supporting women at a most critical time in their lives and helping to provide their new babies with the head start they need and deserve.

This handbook is designed to help provide you with an overview of how our organization functions, as well as an informational guide to the policies and procedures for volunteering with us.

History

Visitation House was conceived in December of 2007 by Fr. Tom Connery, Pastor of St. Peter Catholic Church. Donna Paulin served as our House Mother and Executive Director for many years. We began as a mission of St Peter Catholic Church to help fill the need for pregnant women in crisis who had no place to live. Recognizing the need for independence for the mission to grow, the organization was spun off from the church and became Visitation House Inc., a free-standing 501(c) not for profit independent legal entity in 2015.

The name 'Visitation House' recalls the Gospel of Luke 1:39-56 and refers to the visit of the Blessed Virgin Mary, an unwed virgin teenager pregnant with Jesus, to her cousin Elizabeth, a barren woman of advanced age, who was also pregnant with John the Baptist. Upon hearing Mary's greeting, Elizabeth's baby leapt in her womb, and the women shared great joy and miraculous nature of God's work in their lives.

In 2024 we made the decision to move away from a live-in House Mother model in recognition of the fact that our residents are adult women in need of mentoring and training, not mothering. Our program has expanded to include equipping women with the skills they need to become self-sufficient, including birth preparation, parenting skills, financial literacy and overall life skills. We doubled the capacity of the house to 8 women and 5 babies.

In 2025 we signed a contract with the State of Florida for reimbursement of certain expenses related to supporting women and their families to achieve successful pregnancies.

Mission:

The mission of Visitation House is to provide a safe, secure, and caring environment for pregnant women in crisis and to prepare women to live as self-sufficiently as possible when they leave.

We offer safety, security, personal and spiritual development, financial stability and professional growth for the mother. We do this through counseling, case management, positive reinforcement, community resources and assistance in reaching individual personal goals. Visitation House is a temporary home for women during their pregnancy and after childbirth.

Organization:

Visitation House is a Florida corporation that is registered as a 501(c)3 not-for-profit organization. Our volunteer Board of Directors oversee the Visitation House program, set policy, develop procedures, hire employees, fulfill reporting requirements, establish and manage the budget. The Board of Directors authorizes temporary and permanent committees who raise funds, oversee resident programs, and manage the facility and grounds.

Types of Volunteers

Volunteers work side-by-side with paid employees to accomplish the goals of the organization. They not only help us stretch our budget, but they widen our circle of love, adding character, integrity, and opportunities for our program.

- Governing / Advisory board volunteers provide governance, strategic planning, manage finances, ensure compliance
- Program Services volunteers mentor residents, screen applicants, manage baby supplies and equipment, and provide recreational, spiritual and professional opportunities.
- Community Outreach volunteers help us with Special Event fundraisers, speak to community groups about our program, and help us connect with resources

Volunteer Recognition

We recognize and appreciate our volunteers' gifts of time and talent and we celebrate each year with an Annual Volunteer Appreciation event.

Organization's commitments

The Board and Staff agree to:

- Provide all necessary orientation, training and supervision for your volunteer assignment
- To provide you with clear guidance and instructions
- To change your assignment or add new duties only through mutual agreement
- Keep you informed of any changes in schedule
- Validate and initial your Volunteer Sign-In Log
- Provide you with a letter of reference when requested

Volunteers' commitments

As a Volunteer you agree to:

- Become familiar with and adhere to the policies and procedures as set forth in this Handbook
- Make every effort to provide at least 24 hours' notice, if you are unable to fulfill your assignment (*except in an emergency*)
- Learn about the Visitation House mission and vision, and spread the word about our goals in your community
- Represent the core values of Visitation House and refrain from imposing your personal beliefs and values on the residents.

Residents' commitments

All Residents follow rules set forth in the Resident Handbook. In addition:

- Residents will treat volunteers with respect in speech, dress, promptness and participation
- Residents will respect the confidentiality of the volunteer
- Residents will be grateful for the time, talent and personal support provided by the volunteers.
- Residents will never contact a volunteer directly for assistance without the express approval of the Resident Director or Volunteer Coordinator.

Steps to Becoming a Volunteer

Volunteer application

All prospective volunteers will need to complete a *Volunteer Application* form.

Interview

Before you start, the Volunteer Coordinator will conduct an initial phone or in-person interview to gain further insight into your interests, abilities, and availability for current or future assignments. This allows us to get to know each other to determine the perfect fit.

Orientation

As a new volunteer you will be provided with an orientation to introduce you to the Visitation House and welcome you to the team. Orientations will be conducted on an ongoing, as needed basis throughout the year.

Training

Each volunteer will receive specific training on how to do his/her assigned tasks if that is required. Most assignments will include on-the-job mentoring with an experienced volunteer or staff person. Be sure to ask any questions you have or request further training if you don't feel prepared. Don't assume anything! We want you to be successful.

Contact Information

Important Numbers

House Phone: (386) 822-6014

Volunteer Coordinator: Loretta Wilary (386) 689-6536

Policies & Procedures

Equal Opportunity

The Visitation House Volunteer Program welcomes volunteers of all backgrounds and abilities and does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, or any other inappropriate basis in its volunteer selection process. Due to the nature of our program, many of our volunteer roles are restricted to women, but there are plenty of opportunities for men to support the program.

Anti-discrimination & Sexual Harassment Policy

The Visitation House has a zero-tolerance policy toward any form of discrimination or sexual harassment in our program, and this includes residents, guests, volunteers, vendors and staff. Sexual harassment includes, but is not limited to unwelcome sexual advances, slurs, jokes, and other verbal, visual or physical conduct of a sexual or demeaning nature. In addition to being responsible for their own conduct, board members and staff must ensure that volunteers contribute to an environment that is free of discrimination or sexual harassment.

It is extremely important that any individual who believes he/she is subject to, or has witnessed, unlawful discrimination or sexual harassment, *immediately* report it so it can be dealt with appropriately.

Alcohol and Drug Free Environment

Use of alcohol or illegal drugs in the residence or when performing volunteer activities anywhere is prohibited, as is the abuse of any prescription drug, or reporting for duty under the influence of drugs or alcohol.

Confidentiality

All information obtained during a volunteer assignment is considered confidential and all volunteers are expected to maintain the strictest level of confidentiality regarding Visitation House and its applicants, residents and former residents. This includes, but is not limited to, names and backgrounds of residents, their babies, their employment and their future plans. Volunteers may discuss the program and the residents with other volunteers when such communication facilitates the program but must refrain from any conversations that could be construed as gossip, criticism, dissatisfaction with a person associated with the program, or any other communication that could negatively reflect on the program. This responsibility extends beyond the time that the volunteer is actively at work and continues after volunteers cease to work with the program. **The address of the House is confidential, only the PO Box may be given out by the volunteer.**

Personal Relationships and Communication

You should never share your personal address, phone numbers or social media links with the residents. Residents will be instructed to communicate through employee work email and phone numbers provided by the Visitation House. It is our policy to refrain from

accepting friend or contact requests from current or former residents on any social networking site. Adding them as friends or contacts on social media sites may compromise your confidentiality and our respective privacy concerns. Also, it is not appropriate to give monetary or large gifts as well as loaning money or assisting with any financial issues.

Conflict of Interest

A conflict of interest may exist whenever an individual is able to directly or indirectly benefit themselves, a family member, other individuals, or another organization with which the individual is affiliated, through the use of their role as a volunteer. Please notify us if you believe that you may have a conflict of interest so that the Board can weigh the risks and benefits.

Check-in Log

It's important that we log all volunteer hours. You will be responsible for keeping track of time worked during your assignment and for signing in and out in the "Check-In Log" provided. The "Check-In Log" is used to track your volunteer hours for various purposes such as reporting volunteer statistics on grant applications, organizing special events, or in writing reference letters. The "Check-In Log" represents the only permanent record of your volunteer time.

Attendance

We rely on our volunteers to report on time for assignments. If you are feeling under the weather, or are otherwise unable to attend, we request that you cancel with as much notice as possible.

Use of Privately Owned Vehicle

Volunteers may not transport residents without express permission of the Volunteer Coordinator or Resident Manager. Volunteer must complete and sign an *Authorization to Use Privately Owned Automobiles* and provide a copy of their valid Florida Driver License and automobile insurance card. The vehicle must be equipped with seat belts and be in safe mechanical/operating condition.

Health & Safety

Because safety is everyone's job, volunteers are asked to always be alert to safety hazards. Unsafe conditions should be reported rather than being handled by volunteers. Please notify us of any assignment which may cause you physical discomfort or which could lead to personal injury, so that the situation can be rectified.

For the health as well as respect of our residents and their babies it is important to provide personal space, and ask before touching, picking up or holding the babies. Always wash hands before handling babies.

In a **Medical Emergency** requiring immediate attention, the volunteer should call 911 or go directly to the emergency room.

Volunteer Acknowledgement

Volunteers to our program not only help us accomplish our program's goals but serve as role models and beacons of hope for women in our program and living examples of Christ's love to the community at large. Visitation House volunteers are expected to exhibit the highest standards of moral and ethical behavior, in both word and action.

Volunteers should discuss all questions and concerns with the Volunteer Coordinator or another member of management. We will take appropriate action including counseling, warning, or terminating the services of a volunteer. Visitation House has the right to terminate volunteers at its discretion.

By signing below, I confirm that I have read, understood, and agree to uphold and abide by the contents of this document.

Volunteer Signature : _____

Date: _____