

VISITATION HOUSE, INC.

RESIDENT HANDBOOK

(rev. 7/2022)

Our Mission:

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

We offer safety, security, personal development, empowerment and 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.

House Rules:

The purpose of these house rules is to establish a common understanding between the Board, staff, volunteers, and the residents to ensure a suitable environment for the Visitation House to fulfill its mission. Visitation House may change, modify, suspend, interpret or cancel, in whole or part, any published or unpublished Policy, with or without notice, at its sole discretion, without giving cause or justification to the resident. Such revised information will supersede, modify or eliminate the previously existing Policy. Volunteers and residents are expected to read, understand and abide by these rules and to seek clarification from the Case Manager or designated Board Member if a rule is not understood. Violation of the rules is serious and may lead to termination from the program.

1. Access

Residents are provided with a personal access code to gain access to the house during approved hours. Residents must sign-in and sign-out on the sheet located near the front door each time they leave and return. Residents must be specific about where they plan to be, and who they will be with, and must provide a phone number and address where they can be reached at any time. The House Mother may request proof at any time.

2. Appointments

Residents are responsible for filling out the appointment sheet for each upcoming week. All exceptions must be approved by the House Mother or designated board member.

3. Baby Rules

- **Sleeping Arrangements:**

Babies must sleep in a crib or a bassinet. Babies must never sleep in a car seat, bouncy seat, swing, stroller, or any other kind of seat for more than 30 minutes. At no time should an infant be left alone in an adult bed.

- **Changing Diapers:**

Please use a vinyl pad under your baby when changing him/her. Please do not change diapers on tables, couches, or any other inappropriate surface. Do not discard your baby's dirty diapers in the bathroom or kitchen trash cans. Diapers are to be wrapped in a small plastic bag and then discarded into the garbage can outside. When the house alarm is set until the morning, keep wrapped diapers in a disposal container.

- **Baby Monitors:**

Whenever your baby is not in the same room as you (such as the baby is taking a nap) you must use a baby monitor. It is your responsibility to maintain it so that it has batteries and/or is fully charged and working properly.

- **Carrier placement:**

No car seats, bouncy seats, or other carriers on the dining room table or on the counters.

4. Bedrooms

Residents sleep in the common bedroom until they deliver and must keep their area clean and orderly at all times.

When babies come home, residents are assigned a private bedroom and are expected to maintain the orderliness of the bedroom. Beds must be made up daily, dirty laundry kept in appropriated baskets or hampers until assigned laundry day. No personal belongings, baby supplies, paper trash may be left on the floor and garbage cans must be empty every day or as necessary. Food and drinks (other than water) are not allowed in the bedrooms except for infants. The house Mother or designated board member performs room checks daily

Residents must knock and receive permission to enter before entering a private bedroom. Bedroom doors are to be kept open when resident is not occupying her bedroom. All bedroom doors are to remain unlocked except resident closet door.

5. Behavior

Everyone involved with Visitation House is expected to be honest, polite and courteous with each other. Respect for each other's privacy, property and dignity is essential to the successful operation of the program. Vulgar language, verbal abuse or any kind of aggressive behavior will result in immediate termination from the program.

6. Bulletin Board

Located in the kitchen, the bulletin board is the hub of communications for the house. Schedules, assignments, announcements, menus and other important information is posted here and residents are responsible to check the board regularly.

7. Cell Phones

No cell phones or electronics for the first two weeks. No calls after lights out. Cell phones may be collected before lights out at discretion of the House Mother or designated board member. Phone conversations must not be held over speaker. Please do not share your phone with others.

8. Chores

Residents are expected to contribute to the upkeep of the house by completing daily and weekly chores as assigned by the designated volunteer. The list of chores and the instructions on how to complete them will be explained. The House Mother will confirm that the work has been completed and any work that is not satisfactory will be repeated.

9. Church Services

Residents are required to attend a church service of their choice each week.

10. Classes

Visitation House provides a series of volunteer led classes designed to support the growth and independence of the residents and participation in all classes is mandatory. Exceptions must be requested with the House Mother in advance.

11. Computers

Computers may be used for job search, education, spiritual and personal growth, accessing community resources and personal email. Residents may not download or live stream entertainment programs of any kind, and are prohibited from visiting any adult-oriented websites including any dating services. Residents should not have any expectation of privacy while using Visitation House computers and understand that their browsing history on all electronic devices may be check at any time. Violation of this rule may result in immediate termination from the program.

12. Confidentiality

Confidential information includes all personal information about any current or former resident, volunteer, staff member, directly or indirectly associated with Visitation House. Confidential information shall not be disclosed by any resident, volunteers, staff member or board member to anyone outside the program for any reason.

Information that volunteers and residents learn about each other must be kept private and gossip and destructive criticism will not be tolerated by anyone associated with the program.

In the event that anyone associated with the program becomes aware of information that could impact the health and safety of another person or may impede the mission of Visitation House, they should immediately contact the House Mother or the Program Director. to provide the information. In all emergency circumstances, please contact 911.

13. Curfew

Curfew begins at 10:00 PM daily from Sunday to Thursday, and 11:00 PM on Friday and Saturday. At curfew, the house alarm is set and entry codes disabled. Residents who fail to return to the house by curfew must contact the House Mother to gain entry. If work or other circumstances prevent a resident from returning by curfew, that must be communicated to the House Mother in advance.

14. Dress

Residents are expected to dress modestly and appropriately at all times, including shoes or slippers in the house. Bare feet are only permitted in the bedroom and bathroom. Garments must be of a length and fit that are suitable to the build and stature. Shorts and skirts must be at least mid thigh. Bare midriffs and revealing tops are not acceptable. Acceptable attire is at the sole discretion of the House Mother.

Dress and appropriate undergarments are to be worn at All times in houses common areas or outside . Residents are expected to be up and dressed no later than 9 AM. Once a baby is born up to one month of age there is no set time for resident to be washed and dressed.

15. Employment

A resident without a high school diploma is required to enroll in a GED preparation class and acquire GED.

Unless prohibited by the health care provider, residents must be actively engaged in GED preparation, job search, regular or volunteer employment .

16. Exiting the Program

- Voluntary Exit

When a resident leaves, it is expected that she will give the Program Director two weeks notice so that proper planning for her departure can take place such as exit interview, packing and removal of her belongings, forwarding her mail, etc. It is the resident's responsibility to pack and move all of her belongings. Anything left behind on the day she moves becomes the property of Visitation House. She also must fill out a change of address form with the US Post Office prior to leaving. If there is any reason for the Resident Director or Volunteers to be concerned for the safety of the baby, a report may be filed with the Department of Families and Children. All efforts will be made to notify the mother before the report is made

- Involuntary Exit:

Residents who are terminated from the program will have 30 minutes to gather personal belongings and arrange transportation before being escorted from the premises. Terminated residents must make arrangements with the House Mother or designated board member within 3 days for pickup of any remaining belongings or they will be discarded.

17. Financial

Upon entrance to the Visitation House resident disclose and submit all financial information including cash on hand and statements. A resident who has had any potential financial means to support herself prior to residing at Visitation House is required to disclose that information in full. This includes tax refunds, financial aid, child support and regular funds received from family, friends etc.

Residents must have a checking, savings and/or automatic deposit debit card. Residents must have a financial budget in place which is reviewed with their case manager weekly. Classes are available to teach financial responsibility.

Resident is required to apply for and keep current food stamps Medicaid WIC and other federal or state assistance program.

Residents are required to save 50% of their income to ensure adequate funds for down payments and security deposits when they exit. The other 50% is to cover resident bills and personal items.

During Phase 1, residents begin applications for state and federal assistance programs

During Phase 2, residents enroll in GED program and/or start volunteering and secure employment.

18. Grievances

Residents are encouraged to work with each other in a respectful, cooperative manner. Residents are provided with a journal to record questions or issues. She then works on solving the issue herself and is encouraged to 'sleep on' any unresolved matters. If the issue continues to be a concern, she may discuss it at House Meeting. If issues arise between residents that can't be resolved directly with that individual, residents should report the issue to the House Mother or designated board member.

19. Harmful or illegal substances

The use of illegal drugs, prescription marijuana and alcohol are strictly prohibited in the Visitation House program. Residents are subject to random drug test and failure to submit to test, or failure to the test itself could result in automatic and immediate termination of the program.

Visitation House is a smoke-free facility and smoking and vaping are strongly discouraged. A designated smoking area is provided for residents who are not yet able to quit. Outside smoking must be completed before the alarm is set for the evening in conjunction with the House Mother or designated board member.

All residents are subject to random drug test and must submit within 1 hour of notice. Noncompliance with a drug test request will result in immediate termination of the program.

20. House Meetings

House meetings are held at least monthly and attendance is mandatory. The House Mother or designated board member will post the schedule on the bulletin board.

21. Hygiene

All residents are expected to shower/shampoo, brush their teeth comb their hair, use deodorant and wear clean clothes daily. Finger nails and toe nails are to be clean and neat.

22. Laundry

The laundry room is open at 9:00 AM with the last load in dryer and finished by 9 PM laundry days will be assigned by the House Mother or designated board member. Laundry area is to be left clean for the next resident. All lights in laundry area and garage turned off and the garage access doors are to be shut and locked for the alarm to be set. Residents are responsible for washing, drying, folding and putting away their clothes, bed linens and towels on laundry day.

23. Mail:

Mail is collected and distributed by the House Mother or designated board member.

24. Meals:

Residents are responsible for preparing and cleaning up after their own breakfast and lunch, using their WIC, EBT, any Food Pantry available to them, and any other food, including left overs. Residents may have designated space in the cabinet and refrigerator and should mark personal food items. Unmarked food can be eating by anyone.

Dinner time is an important event in the program and all residents should strive to eat dinner together regularly. Residents will prepare and serve group dinners between 5:00 PM to 7:00PM Monday through Friday and should work cooperatively to prepare meals.

Residents may give a list of ingredients they may need to make meals. Visitation House provides dishes, pots, cups, utensils and there is a dishwasher for daily use. Residents who choose to use disposables must purchase themselves with their 50% personal use funds.

25. Personal Property

All personal belongings will be searched before a resident is permitted to move in to Visitation House. As a courtesy, items that are not needed during the program will be sealed and stored in plastic bins in the garage/designated storage area and will be return to the resident upon leaving the program. While we take all reasonable measures to ensure that residents belongings are safe, Visitation House is not responsible for anything that is lost, damage or stolen.

26. Pets:

Residents are not permitted to have pets on the premises.

27. Phone calls:

Residents may use the house phone to make calls that must be approved by the House Mother or designated board member. Residents are not allowed to make phone calls during quiet time

28. Prescription medication:

All prescriptions are secured by the House Mother or designated board member. Residents are responsible for taking their own medication and must take as prescribed.

29. Quiet Time

Quiet time is observed daily as follows:

- Sunday 9pm – 9am
- Monday 9pm – 9am
- Tuesday 9pm – 9am
- Wednesday 9pm – 9am
- Thursday 9pm – 9am
- Friday 10pm – 9am
- Saturday 10pm – 9am

30. Reporting

Concerns regarding the safety of a baby will be promptly reported to the Department of Children and Families by a designated board member.

31. Rules Violations

Visitation House uses a progressive system for course corrections

- a. Verbal Warning Will be given by House Mother or designated board member to the resident and in the presence of a witness.
- b. Written Warning for second rule infraction signed by House Mother or designated board member, resident and a witness.
- c. Conference Discussion by board members to discuss continued residency and develop a written action plan for Resident success.
- d. Dismissal - Resident may be asked to leave Visitation House for the following reasons:
 1. Violent or abusive behavior toward self or others.
 2. Alcohol or drug use. Failure to agree to random drug testing.
 3. Theft.
 4. Possession or use of weapons
 5. Visitors on property without permission.
 6. Any action that jeopardizes the safety of Visitation House residents, staff, or volunteers.
 7. Consistent unwillingness to follow program rules as outline in the Visitation House Resident Handbook.

32. Television

Cable television is provided in the common area for use during designated hours only. The television will not be on during class, dinner or quiet time, or if the House Mother deems it to be a distraction to the program. Residents are encouraged to work with each other on mutually agreeable programs. The House Mother or designated board member decision on the program appropriateness is final.

33. Transportation

Residents are responsible for their own transportation. Medicaid transportation services are available for medical appointments, and bus passes are available for limited local public transportation are available. Residents should plan their transportation at least one week in advance, and discuss any challenges with the House Mother or designated board member as soon as possible.

34. Visitors

Residents are not permitted to have visitors unless given permission by the House Mother or designated board member. Approved visits will be supervised. Residents may wait in the driveway for pickup by authorized persons only.

35. Visits to Others

Residents are permitted to visit immediate family only with the advance permission of the designated board member. Overnight visits away from the house must be approved at least 2 days prior by the designated board member and in Phase 3. With appropriate permission, resident may leave at 7 PM on Friday and must return prior to 5 PM on Sunday. All chores must be completed and inspected by housemother or designated board member prior to leaving on Friday.

36. Wake Up Times

Residents are responsible to wake up an appropriated time to be out their room by 9:00 AM . Residents must be out of their rooms at getting ready for day. Exceptions must be asked to the House Mother or appropriate board member for approval such as illness. Bed rest required must be in writing from your medical practice and a copy submitted to the House Mother or designated board member.

37. Weapons

Weapons in the house, on the grounds, or in any vehicle are strictly prohibited. Violation will result in an automatic and immediate expulsion and will be reported to the police.

Acknowledgement of Visitation House Resident Handbook:

I acknowledge that I have been given Visitation House Resident Handbook and have reviewed the contents. Placement is primarily the resident's responsibility. We are a transitional housing and are available to assist residents in any way we can. Resources will be provided to the residents. Residents must uphold their individual contracts in order to maintain residency. The Visitation House rules are designed to maintain a workable environment for all involved. The administration of Visitation House reserves the right to remove residents who refuse to abide by these policies. I have read these policies and agree to abide by them.

Resident: _____

Date: _____

Visitation House Witness: _____

Date: _____

*Any exceptions to the rules must be approved by the designated board member and be initialed and/or signed off by resident and the designated board member.