



## Volunteer Handbook

### WHO WE ARE

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 those in need 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 House of Mercy, although our outreach is constantly expanding to serve anyone in physical or spiritual need. From our food pantry, families receive love, compassion, and aid. Always keeping 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 House of Mercy, and have become an organization dedicated to serving those in material and spiritual need.

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

## **Important House of Mercy Information**

### **Phone Numbers:**

House of Mercy Phone Number (703) 659-1636

### **Staff:**

Jessica Root, Executive Director [jroot@houseofmercyva.org](mailto:jroot@houseofmercyva.org)

Sophia Crooks, [scrooks@houseofmercyva.org](mailto:scrooks@houseofmercyva.org)

Erin Tooley, [etooley@houseofmercyva.org](mailto:etooley@houseofmercyva.org)

Renée Murphy, Human Resources Manager

Marc Flores [mflores@houseofmercyva.org](mailto:mflores@houseofmercyva.org)

Crystal O'Hara, Thrift Store Manager [cohara@houseofmercyva.org](mailto:cohara@houseofmercyva.org)

Jonathan Barron, [jbarron@houseofmercyva.org](mailto:jbarron@houseofmercyva.org)

### **Food Pantry Hours of Operation:**

Monday - Friday: 10:00AM – 4:00PM

### **Thrift Store and Donation Center Hours of Operation:**

Monday - Saturday: 10:00AM – 6:00PM

**Website:** <https://houseofmercyva.org>

**Address:** 8170 Flannery Ct., Manassas, VA 20109

This handbook will provide you with the general policies and practices of 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, 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 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, House of Mercy staff and other volunteers. We must not judge one another, especially our clients and fellow volunteers. Everyone deserves a chance and a place to be successful.

Words cannot adequately express our appreciation for your sacrifice of time and commitment to this ministry.

## **House of Mercy Volunteer Conduct**

### **Sexual or Verbal Harassment**

House of Mercy (HOM) promotes a productive work environment and does not tolerate verbal or physical conduct by any individual that harasses, disrupts, or interferes with another's work performance or that creates an intimidating, offensive, or hostile environment.

No form of harassment will be tolerated, including harassment for the following reasons: race, color, national origin, religion, disability, health status, pregnancy, age, military status, or sex.

Any individual who believes that an HOM employee's or volunteer's actions or words constitute unwelcome harassment has a responsibility to report or complain about the situation as soon as possible. The report or complaint should be made to the Executive Director of House of Mercy. Complaints of harassment will be investigated promptly and in an impartial and confidential a manner. A timely resolution of each complaint will be reached and communicated to the parties involved.

Any HOM volunteer who is found to have violated the harassment policy will be subject to appropriate disciplinary action, up to and including termination. HOM prohibits any form of retaliation against employees or volunteers for bringing bona fide complaints or providing information about harassment.

All volunteers are expected to treat others with kindness in words and action. This prohibits behaviors such as gossip and slander. Please be mindful of the words you speak to others. Refrain from unnecessary sarcasm or joking that could be interpreted as hurtful.

**Following these rules is crucial to the mission of treating all peoples at House of Mercy with Christ like love and compassion.**

## **Code of Conduct**

Each volunteer shift will vary in length based on the area in which you are working. The minimum shift is generally three hours. Please stay for your entire shift if possible. 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.

At the beginning of your shift, please sign in using the computer log-in program and sign out when you leave. This information is gathered for grant-writing, auditing purposes, and safety.

The offices are for staff and authorized volunteers only. Clients and the public are allowed only in public access areas.

Due to the professional atmosphere of House of Mercy, volunteers are asked to leave their children at home during their shift. However, if you are an accompanying adult for a minor or a group of minors, the ratio of adults to minors is one adult to five minors. Any larger than this will require an additional adult chaperone.

Volunteers may park in 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 clients, customers and donors. The back of the building is reserved for deliveries only.

Volunteers are encouraged to purchase from the Thrift Store! All purchases directly support the ministry. Please wait for items to be displayed in the store before purchasing them. No "I.O.U.'s" are permitted in place of cash, and no "holding" of items. These standards apply to customers as well.

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.

Volunteer accounts that have no service hours completed after six months, will automatically be archived. Volunteers must contact the volunteer manager if they desire to return and the account is archived.

Volunteer lockers are for daily use only - no overnight storage of personal items or merchandise for purchase. Do not sticker, mark or personalize any locker. They are designed for one day usage only. Volunteers must supply their own locks if they wish to secure items in the lockers. Lockers will be checked nightly. Any locks left on the lockers at the end of the day will be cut off and the locker will be emptied. Any merchandise left in lockers at the end of the day will be removed and returned to the sales floor.

## **Technology Usage**

Except in an emergency, please do not use cell phones, music playing devices, or other personal electronics during your volunteer shift. Computers may not be used for surfing the internet or accessing personal networking sites.

## **Volunteer Dress Code**

All House of Mercy volunteers must abide by House of Mercy dress code. Please dress with modesty in mind. Volunteers must dress modestly and appropriately. This includes wearing long pants or shorts at knee length; short or long sleeve shirts, blouses, or appropriate t-shirts (no inappropriate graphics on clothing). **All volunteers must wear closed toed shoes.**

Crop tops (showing midriff), tight tank tops, provocative clothing, and open toed shoes (flip flops, crocks, and slide on shoes) are not appropriate. You may be asked to return home to change clothing. We recommend that volunteers wear a House of Mercy apron during their shift.

## **Program Assistance**

We are unable to offer free clothing or food to volunteers unless they fill out the “Application for Emergency Assistance” and qualify for House of Mercy’s assistance program. Any volunteer taking items that are not given through proper aid procedures will be dismissed. Any volunteer who receives aid from HOM will be asked to step down as a volunteer until aid is no longer needed.

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.

## **Customer Service Guidelines**

A client, customer, or donor may approach you at any time, regardless of your volunteer duty. Please be respectful and helpful in your communication and take them to the appropriate staff member for assistance.

## **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 House of Mercy is a Catholic based organization, we welcome people of all faiths to serve in our ministry. It is the policy of 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 House of Mercy, and to be in basic agreement with the Roman Catholic Christian church doctrine.

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. 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. 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 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 House of Mercy share responsibility for establishing and maintaining a safe work environment. 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, donation center, food pantry, thrift store, and offices. If they are needed, please inform your supervisor of the injury requiring first aid.

### **Confidentiality Policy**

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

“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 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 House of Mercy (working with clients, handling money, etc.), our policy is that anyone convicted of a felony involving violence or children will not be permitted to volunteer in a direct aid or direct contact capacity. There is always a way to help 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 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**

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**

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 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, House of Mercy will still open at its regular time and volunteers are asked to report for their regular shifts. Decisions to change the regular schedule due to inclement weather will be directly communicated to any scheduled volunteers by staff. 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. Volunteers are asked to communicate to staff if they are unable to come to a scheduled shift due to inclement weather.

## **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 Director. Incident reports are to be filled out by anyone involved in the incident.

## **Photograph Release and Waiver**

I hereby consent to House of Mercy taking photographs of me at the location described above for purposes of internal identification and internal ID badge production. I consent for House of Mercy and its contractors to use my name and photographic image to manage, organize, and catalog my volunteer account internally. Use may occur by House of Mercy staff. I release House of Mercy for all liability for using my photographic images and waive all claims and causes of action against House of Mercy arising from the use of my pictures. I have read this release; I understand its contents and I intend to be legally bound hereby.

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