



# VOLUNTEER HANDBOOK & POLICY MANUAL

INSPIRING PEOPLE. CHANGING LIVES. ENDING HOMELESSNESS.

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[www.shelterinc.org](http://www.shelterinc.org)



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## WELCOME TO SHELTER, INC.

As a new volunteer, welcome to SHELTER, Inc.! We appreciate and value your contribution of time, talent, energy and enthusiasm to help us fulfill our mission. The purpose of this handbook is to guide you in your volunteer experience with us. While the content is intended to inform you of your responsibilities as a volunteer, it is also intended as a reference to be used at your convenience should you have any questions during your volunteer service with SHELTER, Inc. The content and materials in this guide may be modified at any time in order to provide you with the most updated information available.

## ABOUT SHELTER, INC. OF CONTRA COSTA COUNTY

### **Our Mission**

The mission of SHELTER, Inc. is to prevent and end homelessness for low-income residents of Contra Costa County by providing resources that lead to self-sufficiency.

### **Our History**

SHELTER, Inc. of Contra Costa County is an independent, non-profit organization created when the local community became aware of the increased need for homeless services in Contra Costa. As a result of community meetings, the Contra Costa County Task Force on Homelessness was created. In 1986, they started SHELTER, Inc. to alleviate Contra Costa County's homeless crisis.

### **Our Services**

Since its inception, SHELTER, Inc. has helped an estimated 160,000 low-income men, women and children, and has garnered a unique understanding of the causes of homelessness and the necessary components to provide successful solutions. SHELTER, Inc. provides a comprehensive, integrated continuum of services to families and individuals facing eviction, living on the streets or in need of affordable, rental housing. SHELTER, Inc.'s work encompasses three primary elements:

**1. Preventing Homelessness**—Depending on their level of risk, households may be offered one-time financial assistance to help with rent or deposit. Those needing more help are offered short-term rental subsidies combined with three to six months of intensive case management support in areas such as budgeting, education and employment improvements.

**2. Ending the Cycle of Homelessness**—SHELTER, Inc. provides currently homeless families and individuals with temporary housing in conjunction with support services such as job training, educational services and mental health counseling. Whether living at agency-operated sites or in single rental units, the centerpiece to promoting self-sufficiency is one-on-one intensive support with a professional case manager. Site-based programs include an emergency family shelter in Martinez and transitional family centers in Antioch and Pittsburg. SHELTER, Inc.'s site-based programs offer on-site services for the whole family, including employment services for the parents and educational programs for both the parents and children, all with the goal of helping families make lasting changes, changes that lead to healthy families and permanent housing.

**3. Providing Affordable Housing**—SHELTER, Inc. works to address the long term housing needs of low-income, vulnerable residents of Contra Costa County. The agency owns or master leases about 250 rental units. This allows the agency to offer rental housing to people who have been unable to obtain housing, such as people who are homeless, victims of domestic violence, with poor credit histories, or living with a mental or physical disability.



## YOUR VOLUNTEER EXPERIENCE

At SHELTER, Inc. a volunteer is anyone who provides time and talent to our organization through work for office, shelter, event, or any other SHELTER, Inc. projects. We thank you, and all volunteers, for the personal investment you make in our organization and its mission. Every volunteer of SHELTER, Inc. is valuable and everyone's time, talents, and efforts are special gifts that are to be appreciated, respected, recognized, and never taken for granted.

As a volunteer, SHELTER, Inc. commits to providing you with the best opportunity possible. You will:

- ☐ Be assigned appropriate tasks according to your skills, interest, availability, and training.
- ☐ Receive training and supervision for the tasks accepted.
- ☐ Be treated as a fellow team member who contributes to SHELTER, Inc.'s goals.
- ☐ Expect that SHELTER, Inc. will be a good steward of your time.
- ☐ Be given appropriate expressions of appreciation and recognition.
- ☐ Be trusted with confidential information, if necessary, to carry out assignments.
- ☐ Make suggestions that will be acknowledged and valued by staff.
- ☐ Be treated with friendliness and cooperation.
- ☐ Be provided a safe and inviting work environment.

### Volunteer Conduct

SHELTER, Inc. expects you to conduct yourself with common courtesy to others at all times, and wants your volunteer experience to be a positive one.

As a SHELTER Inc. volunteer, you agree to:

- ☐ Represent SHELTER, Inc. with professionalism, dignity and pride.
- ☐ Display respect and courtesy for SHELTER, Inc. employees, other volunteers, guests, visitors, clients and property.
- ☐ Respect the privacy of persons served by SHELTER, Inc. and hold in confidence sensitive, private, and personal information. Remember that client stories are their's to tell, not your's to tell.
- ☐ Follow through and complete accepted tasks, dress in attire that follows the volunteer dress code, and be prepared for your shift.
- ☐ Sign in and out when coming in and going off duty. SHELTER, Inc. needs to keep records of all our volunteer hours.
- ☐ Report any emergencies or unsafe conditions to an appropriate staff member.
- ☐ Keep personal opinions and actions separate from those made as a representative of this organization.
- ☐ Be neutral on matters of religion and refrain from promoting religious or political viewpoints in interacting with clients, other volunteers and staff.
- ☐ Maintain appropriate boundaries with clients, staff and other volunteers.

### Drug-free Volunteer Environment

SHELTER, Inc. maintains a drug-free workplace and volunteer environment in accordance with the provisions of the California Drug-Free Workplace Act of 1990. SHELTER, Inc. strictly prohibits the unlawful manufacture, distribution, dispensation, possession, or use of any controlled substance in the volunteer environment.





### **Volunteer Protection Act**

The Volunteer Protection Act of 1997 provides immunity from lawsuits filed against a nonprofit's volunteer where the claim is that he/she carelessly injured another in the course of helping the nonprofit. The Volunteer Protection Act is similar to the Good Samaritan Act. You will be provided a copy of The Volunteer Protection Act.

### **Dress Code**

SHELTER, Inc. is a professional institution and as such must project a professional image and manner. Neatness and good taste in dress and manner significantly affect the perceptions and credibility of employees and the agency to clients, co-workers, volunteers, donors, vendors and the general public. Personal hygiene, cleanliness and neatness are essential.

### **Absences and Punctuality**

The positions that volunteers fill are critical to SHELTER, Inc. If you are unable to attend a scheduled volunteer day, or if you will arrive late, please contact your supervising staff or the Resource Coordinator (through phone or email) in advance so your position can be covered.

### **Sign-in Sheets**

Your time is very valuable to SHELTER, Inc. It is imperative that we track and document the hours you donate to us. Each time you volunteer, you will be required to sign in and out. If there is not a sign in sheet available, please make your supervising staff aware of this immediately. Volunteer hours can be used for recognition, grant writing and insurance purposes. If working independently, please keep a log of your volunteer hours and submit them weekly to your supervising staff.

### **Harassment and Discrimination Policy**

The agency has a longstanding commitment to a work environment that respects the dignity and worth of each individual. Inappropriate workplace behavior and unlawful harassment create conditions that are wholly inconsistent with this commitment. The purpose of the policy is to foster a work environment that is free from all forms of unlawful harassment, whether that harassment is because of race, color, religious creed, sex, national origin, ancestry, age, gender, physical or mental disability, marital status, sexual orientation, medical condition or any other characteristic protected by federal, state or local law.

### **Grievances**

If a volunteer has any problems or concerns related to his or her volunteer position or to other SHELTER, Inc. employees or volunteers, he/she should speak with his/her supervising staff. If the issue is not resolved, the volunteer should speak with the staff member's immediate supervisor. If the issue is still not resolved, the volunteer should speak with the Resource Coordinator. SHELTER, Inc. will make every attempt to address the concern.

### **Confidentiality Policy**

Volunteers understand the importance of communicating information with others as needed to support smooth and efficient operation of SHELTER, Inc. and its programs and to guarantee the safety and welfare of all SHELTER, Inc. program participants, residents, staff, and other volunteers. Volunteers will not discuss any actions/incidents or use anyone's name(s) with anyone outside the agency without first discussing and obtaining approval from the Resource Coordinator.



### **Safety Policy**

You and SHELTER, Inc. share the responsibility of establishing and maintaining a safe work environment. SHELTER, Inc. will attempt to ensure a safe work environment that complies 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.

### **Incident Reporting**

Any incident in which you may be harmed or injured should be immediately reported to the volunteer coordinator. A form should be completed including all of the incident information. These forms are available through the resource coordinator.

### **At-will Volunteering**

Volunteering with SHELTER, Inc. is an at-will opportunity. We will do our best to meet your expectations by matching your skills and desire with the best volunteer opportunity available. If at any time, you are not satisfied with your volunteer experience, we will attempt to match you with another opportunity. Likewise, If SHELTER, Inc. determines that we have inappropriately placed you, we may recommend a different volunteer opportunity for you.

### **Conflict of Interest**

SHELTER, Inc. expects volunteers to support and adhere to the high standards of the business ethics that we have sought to develop and maintain. SHELTER, Inc. wants to make it clear that no conflict of interest should exist that could conceivably influence volunteers' judgment in handling SHELTER, Inc. business or that might present an unfair advantage to suppliers, vendors, clients, or contractors.

### **Gifts and Favors**

Agency volunteers may not give or accept gifts, payments, fees or services or other favors that influence, or appear to influence, the performance of their duties. In particular, volunteers should never directly offer financial or other personal assistance to individual clients. All in-kind and financial donations must be received by SHELTER, Inc. staff or volunteers under the direction of staff.

### **Client Relations**

It is the policy of the Agency that clients be treated with dignity and respect. Volunteers must maintain a professional attitude in all dealings with clients and their families. Corporal punishment of a client by anyone is prohibited. No volunteer shall strike, abuse, use threatening or intimidating language or inflict cruelty by physical, psychological or any means upon a client.

Additionally, in order to protect clients, to insure fair and impartial treatment of clients, and to support SHELTER, Inc.'s mission, the following conduct is prohibited:

- ☐ Volunteers are prohibited from dating or pursuing social, romantic or sexual relationships with clients.
- ☐ Volunteers must not hire to work, meet socially, trade, barter, or otherwise engage in any non-professional transactions with clients.
- ☐ Volunteers must not lend or give money at any time to clients.
- ☐ Volunteers must not directly or indirectly accept from any client or member of a client's family anything in the nature of a tip, gift or the promise of a gift.



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- ☐ Volunteers are prohibited from engaging in undue familiarity with clients or their families.
- ☐ Volunteers must not discuss client business with the client's family or friends.
- ☐ Volunteers are prohibited from transporting clients in their personal vehicles.
- ☐ Volunteers must not escort clients at any time, unless it has been approved by a SHELTER, Inc. staff member.

If any volunteer becomes aware of any violation, the volunteer must immediately report the matter to their supervising staff so that it can be investigated promptly. Volunteers should feel free to report, in good faith, any violation without fear of reprisal or retaliation of any kind. SHELTER, Inc. will treat such information as confidential to the extent it can do so without failing to fulfill its legal obligations. Violation of this policy may result in disciplinary action, up to and including, termination of volunteer.

#### **A Positive Volunteer Experience**

Your volunteer time, talent and commitment are valuable to SHELTER, Inc. and to the families we serve and we fully anticipate that your volunteer experience with us will be both fulfilling and meaningful for you. Please know that you are making a difference in the lives of those you are helping. Depending on your volunteer duties and length of service, you may or may not personally observe the direct impact of your efforts on the families served.

If you are in direct contact with clients, we ask you to keep in mind that families seeking services or housing with SHELTER, Inc. come to us in their time of need, often in crisis and desperation. Know that clients may not all react in a manner that you might anticipate and you may hear comments or observe behaviors that seem inappropriate. Many of the families find it difficult to graciously accept the caring and kindness of strangers. Given their state of crisis, this can be normal. In the process of working with a SHELTER, Inc. case manager, challenging behaviors will be addressed as appropriate.

**Thank You for Volunteering with SHELTER, Inc.!**



## SITE CONTACT INFORMATION

**SHELTER, Inc. Main Office:**

(925) 335-0698 / (925) 335-9815 fax  
1333 Willow Pass Road Suite 206 Concord, CA 94520

**Mountain View House:**

(925) 228-6920 / (925) 228-8697 fax  
1391 Shell Avenue, Martinez, CA 94553

**Lyle Morris Family Center:**

(925) 755-8591 / (925) 755-8595 fax  
4553 Delta Fair Blvd, Antioch CA 94509

**Pittsburg Family Center:**

(925) 439-8559 / (925) 432-4150 fax  
P.O. Box 1294 / 84 West 6th Street, Pittsburg, CA 94565

**Resource Coordinator, Theresita Gonzalez**

Theresitag@shelterinc.org  
(925) 957-7561