

Family Promise of Harrisburg Capital Region (FPHCR)

Volunteer Guide



WELCOME

Dear Volunteer,

Welcome to the FPHCR Network! We guarantee this opportunity will be both challenging and rewarding. It will stretch you in ways you never expected. You will meet people from your congregation and other congregations you may not have met otherwise. You will get the chance to provide a safe environment for families during the most transitional and stressful time in their lives. You will get the chance to make a difference, in small and big ways. Your relationships with the families will change both their lives and yours.

This will not always be easy. In fact, it often won't be. However, we are called to care for those who are hungry and homeless. We were never told it would be easy.

We hope this guide helps you to feel confident in your position. Please know that we're with you every step of the way and are excited to partner with you to help change the lives of children and parents in our community!

Sincerely,

FPHCR Board & Staff

Guest quotes about our volunteers:

"I didn't know how many people cared about other people's situations. I get emotional when I think about it."

"There are actually good people out there – who won't judge you because you're 'homeless.' They just care about you, being you."

"The most important thing I learned was that God is helping us through people."

Our Guests

Our Families

1. Families must have a child or be pregnant to qualify.
2. We assist anyone in the “family” (includes extended family members, boyfriends/girlfriends, etc.)
3. LGBT couples can qualify for the program as a family unit.
4. We are one of only three organizations that works with intact families, families with teenagers, and single fathers.

Requirements

1. Drug & alcohol-free at least 30 days – typically longer
2. Must not be currently fleeing domestic violence situation
3. No abuse of children or violent felonies on background check

Referral Sources

1. School districts
2. Pastors/clergy
3. Other shelter programs
4. Social service agencies (e.g. New Hope)
5. Child-assistance programs (e.g. Early Intervention, Head Start)
6. Self-referral (families often find us online)

How many people?

1. 3 families are served at one time (no more than 13 individuals).
2. This is typically 12-17 families/year.

Why do families become homeless?

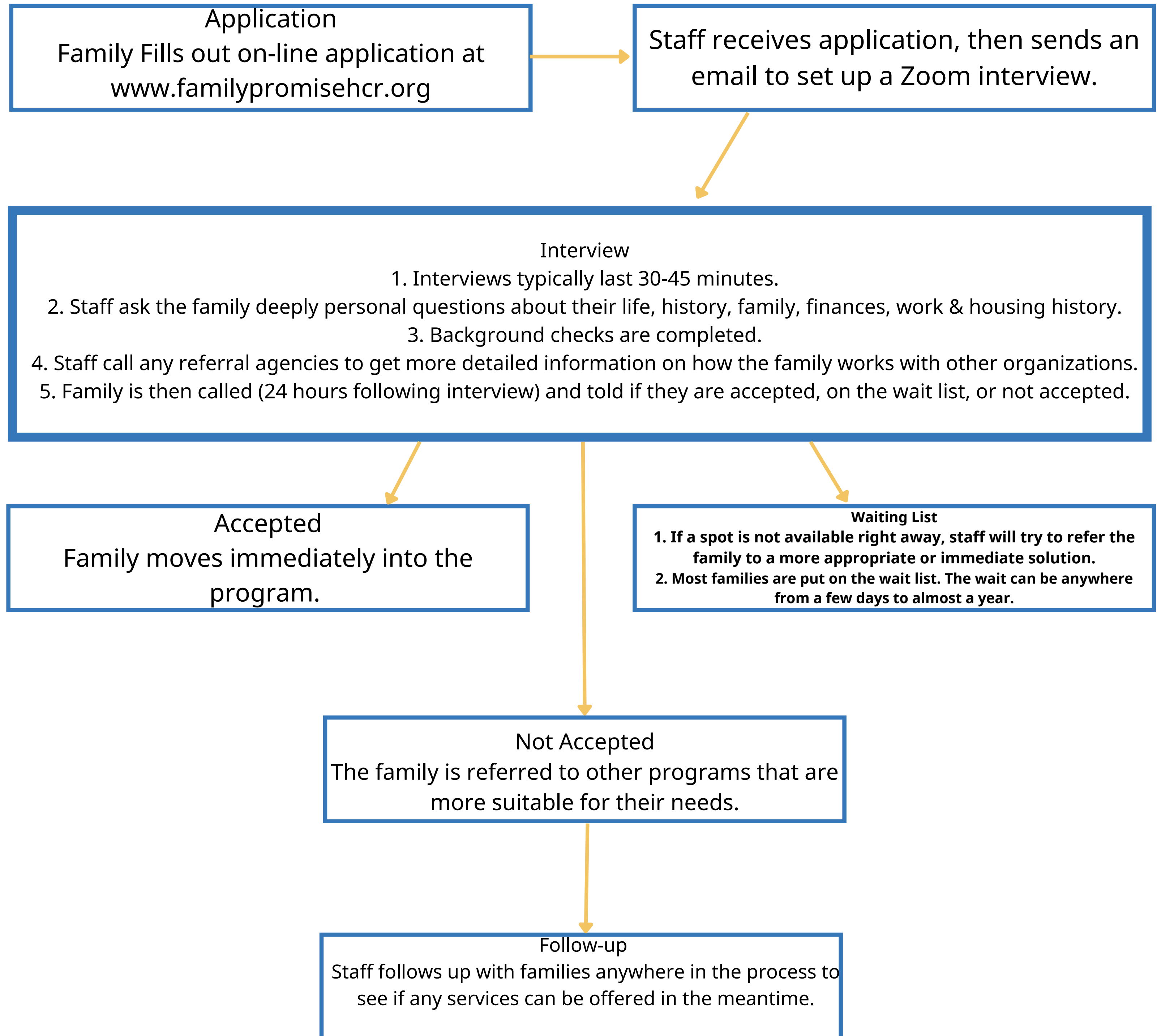
1. Emergencies (fire, storm, flood, etc.)
2. Loss of a job
3. Family medical expenses
4. Unexpected expenses
5. Loss of a significant other through death, separation, divorce, or prison
6. Changes in family dynamics
7. Poor credit, past eviction, criminal record

**The reasons for family homelessness vary, but the root cause of homelessness is a lack of affordable housing. **

Family Profile

1. Family profiles are used to inform volunteers about the information they need to know in order to provide hospitality & good service to our families.
2. Information included: names, ages, birth dates, allergies, family need for pack ‘n plays and high chairs, schedule information for family, and emergency contact.

Application Process



FPHCR Program Services

Interfaith Hospitality Network

1. A network of congregations rotates providing overnight lodging, meals, and support to our families for one week at a time.
2. Volunteers assist with various tasks to provide for our families' basic needs (see volunteer roles section on pages 6-9).
3. During the day, families are at the Day Center for a safe place to work on goals and care for their basic needs.

Day Center

1. Care for their basic needs (showering, laundry, prepare for the day)
2. Store their belongings
3. Work on the computers to apply for jobs, update resumes, apply for services, look for housing, etc.
4. Receive intensive case management services (goal setting & accountability with staff)
5. Participate in weekly house meeting
All families participate together
6. Focus on a different skill each week – life skills, budgeting, parenting, job skills, healthy eating, stress management, etc.

Referrals

1. Social service agencies: New Hope, HELP Office, Homeless Assistance Program, assistance office, Road to Success, etc.
2. Educational programs: Early Intervention, Head Start, school programs
3. Specific skills: Cumberland Cares (one-on-one parenting program)

After-Care

1. Families are welcome and encouraged to follow up with us after they leave the program for guidance and support.

General Expectations

1. It is important for families to be prepared for transportation to and from the Day Center. Arrival and departure from the Day Center are the following:
 - M-F at 6:00am (unless an earlier time is requested and agreed by all families), Departure from the host site should be about 6:30 a.m. weekdays; Saturday at 7:30am, and Sunday at 7:30am.
 - Departure from the Day 6pm.
2. All guests are responsible for their own families and expected to keep the following tidy:
 - General congregating area
 - Sleeping area
 - Personal eating utensils and dishes
 - Bathroom
 - There are no visitors allowed at any time.
4. All doors will be locked promptly at 9:00pm, this is for the safety of everyone, and doors should not be propped, opened, etc.
5. "Quiet time" begins at 9:00pm and families will remain in their personal sleeping areas at this time and maintain quietness to respect all preparing for sleep.
6. There is ZERO tolerance for the use of or possession of illegal substances and/or alcohol.

Respect

1. Mutual respect should be given to all (other families, staff and volunteers), which includes: language, belongings, personal beliefs and space.
2. Children should NEVER be left unattended- within visible sight of the parent at all times.
 - Volunteers and Staff are not responsible for children and should not be left alone with them at ANY time.
 - Families can care for one another's children if mutually agreed upon.
3. When watching videos, use of electronics, or cell phones; be mindful of those around you and ensure respectful tones, volumes, etc. is used to ensure respect for all.
4. Respect the common areas at the congregations and ensure children do not jump, run, damage, or break anything while at congregations.
5. Smoking is only permitted outside and within designated areas.

Transportation

1. ALL individuals must use the appropriate safety precautions appropriate for each person- i.e. car seats, seatbelts, etc. NO EXCEPTION. The van will not depart until all are appropriately secured.
 - a. This includes rear-facing w. forward-facing seats for the appropriate ages of younger children.
2. NO opened food or drink is permitted in the vans at any time; exception is made for infants that are bottle fed. There will be no eating permitted in the vans.
3. NO items are permitted to be left in the vans and all are responsible for their own personal belongings.
4. No loud music, videos, or loud phone calls during the transports to and from Day Center.

General Expectations Continued

Food/Meals

1. All families are responsible to make staff/volunteers aware of any food allergies, religious needs, and/or likes/dislikes for all family members.
2. Families are responsible to serve themselves and/or other family members.
3. No food or drink is permitted anywhere other than the designated eating area.
4. No outside food is permitted at any time, exceptions will be made for infants, and/or if dietary restrictions are required. Staff must be made aware of this prior to arriving at the congregations.

Housekeeping

1. All guests are responsible for keeping rooms and other areas clean and orderly.
2. Parents are responsible to ensure children put away toys, videos, or other activity items within the common areas before retiring to sleeping areas.
3. All guests are responsible to clean their dishes and eating utensils after meals. This includes breakfast, lunch prep, and/or snacks prior to leaving the congregation.
4. Guests are responsible for turning off lights and unplugging hot items, i.e. irons, flat irons, hair dryers, etc. prior to leaving for the day.

The above guidelines are solely used as minimal expectations of guests while engaged in programming and is for the sole purpose to ensure each family/volunteer has an overall positive experience.

Your Congregation

Volunteer roles

Breakfast/ lunch

Each congregation handle breakfast and lunch supplies differently. Some options are:

- Provide breakfast and lunch are quick grab-and-go items. The families often take items to the Day Center to eat.
- Have Bagels, cereal boxes, fruit, granola bars, sandwich materials, bags of chips, etc. on hand.
- Donate items prior to the host week.
- Choose not to provide these supplies

Dinner preparer

1. Dinner should be fairly nutritious. Typically dinner preparers make the meal at home and then bring it to the congregation.
2. It is helpful to provide multiple items so that families have choices (e.g. add some bread/rolls and a salad as side dishes). You do NOT need to cater to our families. (e.g. If they request filet mignon or lobster, do not provide it.)
3. Families often want to pack extra for lunch the next day.
4. Dinner should be new each night. Left-overs can be used as lunches or sent home with the preparer, but we prefer to have a new meal each evening.

Meals are ready to eat at the congregation by 6:15 pm - 6:30 pm

Meal/Evening hosts - 6-8:30 pm

1. 2-4 people is best during this time.
2. Dinner preparers can also serve as evening hosts.
3. Hosts first sit down and eat with the families.
4. The rest of the time, they can play games, watch movies, do puzzles or other activities with the families. Everyone should feel invited to participate but not required.
5. Some families need more personal time than others. Please do not be offended if they go into their room right after dinner.

Overnight hosts 8:30 pm - 7 am- this role is not required by FPHCR, but many churches choose to have volunteers in this position.

1. We recommend 2 people (1 male; 1 female).
2. Overnights should spend time with families if they are still awake and then ensure lights are out by 9pm.
3. They will then sleep in the volunteer space overnight.
4. Overnights are available in case of emergency situations, but typically, all they need to do is sleep!
5. DO NOT wake up the families in the morning, unless someone has over-slept. If it is five minutes prior to the van arriving, then please wake up the guests to make sure the van leaves on-time.
6. Double check the rooms for any fire hazards and then leave the rooms as they are before locking up for the day.

Your Congregation

Volunteer roles Continued

Sleeping Accommodations

- 3 separate “rooms” for families (can be partitioned space)
- Linens & blankets are provided by FPHCR but extras kept at the host site are recommended (LOTS of blankets are recommended – our families are often cold)
- Small table and light
- Night lights
- Mattresses are provided by FPHCR.
- Mattress covers are provided by FPHCR.
- If mattresses will be on a cold surface, you may want to use a throw rug or yoga mats so that cold air doesn’t seep through the mattresses as easily.
- Provide a comfy place for families to watch TV and relax.
- Set up tables for eating dinner together.
- Set up table area for food extras (snacks, breakfast, and lunch labeled for Family Promise use).

Van drivers

1. Van drivers must email the community outreach associate a picture of their license to be covered under FPHCR insurance..
2. Van should not be driven until every person is buckled.
- 3 Typical van schedule:
 - Evening Pick up from the Day Center at 6 pm..
 - Morning arrival at the Day Center between 6:30 and 7 a.m.
 - Saturday the van leaves the congregation at 7:30 am. (This time can be adjusted as needed)
 - Sunday the van leaves the congregation at 7:30 am. (This time can be adjusted as needed)
 - Van schedule may change due to work or school schedules of guests. Staff will inform volunteer leaders so that drivers know.
 - A set of van keys are provided by FPHCR.
5. Van location:
 - On the first Sunday of hosting, 2 people must drive to the Day Center in 1 vehicle so that 1 person can drive the van back, and 1 person can drive the vehicle back.
 - The van then remains at the congregation for the duration of the host week. Drivers simply drive to the congregation, drive the guests in the van, and then return the van to the congregation to drive home in their personal vehicle.
 - On the last Sunday of hosting, 1 person drives the van, and 1 person follows in a car so that both people can come back in the car.
 - If the congregation prior to or following the host week is in closer proximity than the Day Center, leaders may want to arrange a drop-off point at the congregation instead of the Day Center.

Your Congregation

Volunteer Roles Continued

Volunteer leaders (VLs)

1. VLs organize and recruit volunteers from their congregation (see volunteer recruitment below).
2. VLs make sure all volunteer slots are filled and cover any open slots throughout the week.
3. VLs do an orientation Sunday night with the families (see Appendix C).
4. VLs attend bi-monthly meetings with FPHCR staff to get updates on the program and procedures and to brainstorm best practices with other leaders.
5. VLS read weekly emails from FPHCR to keep abreast of what's happening in the program.

Assistant volunteer leaders

1. It is advisable for VLs to have at least 1-2 other leaders.
2. Assistants may take over a specific volunteer area for recruitment (van driving, overnights, meals, etc.)
3. Assistants are also helpful if the main VLs are ill or on vacation during a host week.

Volunteer recruitment

- Remember that you can always ask friends, family, co-workers, etc. It doesn't need to be all congregation members.
- The best way to get people to sign up is to ask them. Most people will not just sign up on a sheet.
- Keep in mind that people always come through at the last minute. It always seems to work out!
- There are some great on-line resources to consider. That is sometimes easier for people to use, and they often send reminder emails as well. It will save you a lot of time! Recommendations: volunteer sign-up and time to sign up.
- We have a list of volunteers available to draw from if you have a large number of volunteer vacancies.

Volunteer training

- We encourage all volunteers to have some training...at the very least a thorough reading of this manual which includes general information on the program, our families, and how best to interact.
- FPHCR has a one-hour training available for host partners via zoom or in person.
- Family Promise National provides online training, also. Links available from staff.
- We highly recommend a re-training for each congregation once a year. It helps to get everything organized and is a good opportunity to touch base with staff and other volunteers. After volunteers have hosted a few times, they develop different kinds of questions.

How to be an excellent FPHCR leader

UPLIFT: VLs are the face of FP to the congregation. It's important to remain positive and uplifting.

TREAT EACH FAMILY AS A NEW FAMILY: Sometimes being a FP leader can be challenging and frustrating. Vent to staff, a Board member, or a confidant. Spreading negativity about FP will take away from other volunteers' experiences and will be damaging to the program. One family may create some challenges, but the way it is handled by the leader will help everyone from the congregation to respond positively. Don't let one poor experience ruin it for the rest of the families who truly need the program.

ATTEND MEETINGS: Attending network committee meetings will help VLs to be more informed about the program and be empowered to handle situations.

ASK QUESTIONS: Contact staff with questions. Don't wait until the week is over because issues cannot be addressed as easily after the fact.

BE FLEXIBLE!!!!

TRUST THE PROCESS: If you do not have trust in what the staff is trying to accomplish with our guests, it will become difficult to work together. If you have questions, ask. Be honest. But in the end, we are here to work together as a team. We need your help, and if you aren't able to trust the work we're doing, it will be more difficult to provide high-quality programming to our families.

Share Information: Share Family Promise HCR updates, highlights, and events with your congregation, and volunteers so that they can feel a part of our work.

Guest interactions

What do I say?

1. Many volunteers struggle, especially the first-time volunteering, with knowing what to say. The annual training is helpful for this!
 2. Talking about the kids is always a good way to break the ice.
 3. It can feel awkward in getting started, but that's okay! Just relax and be yourself.
- *The Hospitality Code was created by FP National (see Appendix K) for helpful hints on how to create a welcoming environment.
- *The Ministry of Presence was created by another FP affiliate (see Appendix I) for helpful hints on how to interact with families during hosting.

Emergency procedures

1. Staff rotates being on-call so that someone is always available in case of after-hours emergencies or questions.
2. **In case of an emergency, dial 717-888-9093.** Please leave a message so that if the person is not able to respond immediately, leave a message and they will respond.
4. In the case of a true emergency (e.g. medical emergency), first dial 9-1-1. Then, call the on-call person to update them on the situation.
5. **Note:** The on call number is not just for emergencies. You can also dial the on-call number if someone doesn't show up at the congregation, there seems to be a schedule change of which you weren't aware, or any other issue that might arise. That way, the person on-call is up to date and can resolve the issue.

Responding to challenging guest situations

1. Overactive kiddos
 - If kiddos are extremely active but the parent is engaged and ensuring there is no property damage, try to just go with the flow.
 - If there is property damage potential, intervene! You do not need to let the kids damage any property. Then, make sure the parent is notified and engaged immediately.
 - Let volunteers know to be prepared for this. They may want to plan extra activities, play games outside, go to a park, etc. if the kids really just need to run off some energy.

Guest interactions

Responding to challenging guest situations continued.

2. Challenging parenting styles

- In every situation, please understand that our parents are under a significant amount of stress and often feel they are under the microscope everywhere they go. All parenting styles are different. It is something that we address at the Day Center, however; if you have severe concerns or are unsure of something, please let us know! We appreciate your extra set of eyes and ears. Please also understand that change happens over time. You will not see parenting skills change overnight and maybe not even while families are in the network.

3. Absent parent

- Invite the parent to join you and the child in an activity.
- Ask the parent if you can do an activity with the child for a certain period of time and then will expect the parent to take over at that point.
- Ask the parent to stay involved and watch the child.

4. Strict parent

- Ask the parent if the child can participate in an activity you are doing for a certain period of time.
- Allow them some space.

5. Abuse

- If you suspect there is an abuse situation, contact staff to inform them of the situation so that they can address it with the family.
- If there is an immediate concern that a child is being abused, call 9-1-1 and then inform whoever is on call.

6. Evening chores being disregarded

- If a parent does not clean up after dinner, politely ask him or her to do so.
- If a parent has young children and is struggling, offer to assist by watching the kiddos while he/she washes dishes.
- Don't do chores for families, but you can assist with them so that you are working together in the space.

Evening activities

1. Many volunteers enjoy bringing in an activity or fun thing to do with the families, which is great!
2. Activities that go well are games, crafts, baking cookies, holiday-related activities, and outside games.
3. All families should feel welcomed to participate but not like they are required to participate.
4. Please keep in mind that families may be extremely tired or stressed out. They may not be excited to participate in evening activities, and that is okay!
5. If you have children, bringing them along to volunteer can really help open up the kiddos in the program and bridge some of the gaps between people.
6. If your congregation has faith-related activities going on, the families can participate in those. Again, all families should feel welcome but not required to participate in religious activities.

The Ministry of Presence

The Ministry of Presence is the compassionate act of simply being ‘present’ to someone in need. By taking the time to sit with someone, pay attention, not judge, listen, not talk, and be open, you are giving the incredible gift of treating that person as an equal, thereby restoring value and worth in that person.

Homelessness is a very difficult social concern with no easy answers or solutions. Although our natural tendency is to fix problems, one may never be able to solve the problems of homelessness or poverty. Instead, through the act of ‘presence,’ you are able to give aid and support to (not fix) someone who may be experiencing a very dark time of their life.

Hospitality

In addition to the amazing service of churches opening their doors and setting up rooms to host the Family Promise guest families, the church volunteers then offer the families comfort and care through their presence, by sharing a meal, doing a puzzle with the kids, listening, watching TV with the guests, etc. Volunteers are advised that they are not the warden, the counselor, the social worker, the entertainer, but that they are simply there to be present and show the guests that there are good people of faith who care about them.

Volunteers are reminded that the hosting space at the churches is meant for the guest families and that the guests should always feel welcome in that space, even though there are new volunteers coming every few hours and unfortunately, sometimes, asking the same questions, “Where are you from?”, “Where did you live before?”, “How did you get into this situation?” Volunteers should simply say, “Hi, I’m the Evening Volunteer, my name is so-and-so, what’s your name? Nice to meet you,” and then just kick off their shoes and hang out, watch TV or read, be a listener and not a talker – in other words, be ‘present’.

The Spirit of Volunteering

I believe that there is an inherent desire that urges all of us to volunteer our time and talents to causes and people in need. For those who volunteer with Family Promise, I thank you sincerely. While volunteering, I ask that you keep in mind that your volunteerism, large or small, positively impacts the lives of the families being served. I also ask that you try to uphold the true spirit of volunteerism by being able to honestly give of yourself, and not want anything in return – not even gratitude. Family Promise does not proselytize, but we all have the unique opportunity to be examples of our faiths through service.

Guest Confidentiality

Family Promise is committed to maintaining the privacy of our guest families' personal information. After you have met and interacted with the guest families, please keep all information that you may have learned about the guests (where they work, where they attend school, etc.) confidential, including any time you might come across them in public. Thank you.

Scenarios

Two or more guests are engaged in a loud verbal conflict

Remove all other guests & volunteers from the area of conflict

It is not the volunteer's responsibility to solve the conflict

Remind guests in the conflict that calling the on-call # is an option

Offer to be a sounding board for individual guests to vent

The goal is to get through the night & to avoid terminations

Brief volunteer leader about the incident

A guest visitor enters the host site

This is against FPHCR policy

Volunteers should: Introduce themselves to visitor

Ask the visitor to wait outside

Get guest

Brief volunteer leader

Scenarios continued

A guest is absent from the host site & volunteers were not notified of the absence

Call on-call

Lock door at curfew time

Guests complain about the food provided at the host site

Volunteers are not expected to be short-order cooks

Host sites should, however, stock their kitchens with food alternatives, budget-permitting

Brief volunteer leader about the incident

FP National Hospitality Code

1. It's nice to hear your name, so learn the names of our guests too.
2. Labeling people creates invisible barriers. Remember that guests are guests, not "the homeless". Labeling – whether spoken, or printed on a posted sign – creates divisions and can foster an "us" and "them" syndrome.
3. Personal questions can be tough to answer, so don't put guests in awkward positions by asking personal questions. If guests need to talk, give them the chance, but don't pry.
4. We all like to keep some things to ourselves. All information about our guests is confidential. Don't discuss guests' situations with other people.
5. Everyone can use a little privacy. Our houses of worship become temporary homes for our guests. Knock before entering a guest's room.
6. Sometimes we need to spend time alone. Respect guests' need for quiet time alone or with family.
7. We all have bad days. Depression, sadness, and hopelessness may come. Allow guests the space to deal with their emotions. Be prepared to forgive outbursts without judging guests ungrateful.
8. We understand and care for our children. Allow guests to do the same. Avoid contradicting guests' instructions to their children. Always ask parents' permission before giving things to children.
9. Parents need a break. Offer to tutor, play with, and plan activities for interested children while their parents take a break.
10. Adult guests should be treated like adults. Although our guests are in situations that may make them temporarily dependent on others, remember that they are adults who are capable of making their own decisions.

Communication: We will send you family profiles and other information before your host weeks. We may send profiles a few weeks ahead, but ask host sites to recognize there could be changes.

Support: You are not all alone on your host weeks! We expect that you will have questions, concerns and sometimes issues during your host weeks. Don't hesitate to contact us. We're here for you. Also, we have non-affiliated volunteers that can help if you are having difficulty filling your slots.

Access: We have an on-call number where we can be reached for anything that might arise. 717-888-9093. It doesn't have to be an "emergency" to call us. You can let us know if you have questions about how to handle a situation, questions about if something is a problem or not, or anything you aren't sure how to handle.

Staff

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