

I. Volunteer Overview

Understanding your role is essential before you volunteer. Volunteers form a temporary support system for the families going through the trauma of homelessness. Preparation and planning will help you deal with the many variables that affect your experience. Make sure you have received adequate information from your coordinators regarding the details of your task.

Your care of the families' basic needs for shelter, food, and compassion frees the families to work on issues such as employment, housing, day care, etc. You are not isolated in your role as a volunteer. Each part of the Inter-Faith Hospitality Network has a specific role with the families. There are others helping the family to deal with their budget, find employment, secure housing, work on parenting issues, and cope with the stresses they are feeling. It is important for you to work within the existing structure. Before offering additional help for a family beyond your specific role, contact the Shelter Director or Case Manager.

If an issue arises when you are volunteering, it is essential to report information to the appropriate people. Families having difficulties following either the IHN Family Guidelines (see attachment) or having other problems in the program are best helped by first contacting Keystone Opportunity Center Staff.

As a volunteer, you are asked to facilitate an environment which permits the families to maintain their own family structure. It is best to defer to the parents regarding issues with their children. Volunteers should only intervene if a child's behavior is putting themselves or others at risk or may lead to the destruction of property. If you wish to involve your children you should encourage them to follow the same rules that are expected of the Network families.

Volunteers with the proper foundation provide an experience for families that may be the most loving experience of their lives.

Please read the Confidentiality Code (Attachment #VII.) at the end of this Volunteer Manual. Then complete and sign the Volunteer Information Form each year you choose to volunteer with the Interfaith Hospitality Network. Thank You!