



Alliance for Living

Volunteer Handbook

Table of Contents

Mission Statement	3
Goals	3
Importance and Benefits of Volunteering	4
Volunteer Protection Act	4
Staff Volunteer Coordinator	5
Dress Code	5
Boundaries	6
Volunteer Support	6
What is AIDS?	6
Universal Precautions	7
Confidentiality	8
General Do's	8
Handbook Agreement Form	9

Mission Statement

The Alliance for Living is dedicated to improving the quality of life for people affected by HIV/AIDS in New London County.

The Alliance for Living accomplishes its mission through

- 1) Direct services that support the life needs of people impacted by HIV/AIDS,**
- 2) Education and prevention services, and**
- 3) Advocacy.**

The values and principles that guide the work of the Alliance for Living include:

1. The Alliance works in partnership with people affected by HIV/AIDS;
2. The Alliance is open to anyone affected by the disease;
3. The Alliance seeks to work in partnership with the community and to develop approaches that build on existing resources;
4. Belief in individual self-sufficiency;
5. Open communication with its constituency and the broader community;
6. Adapting to changes in the external environment and to be responsive to constituent need;
7. Belief in keeping people informed about changes in the disease, health services, benefits, new treatments, etc.;
8. Willing to do what has to be done to meet the needs of constituents;
9. Financial security for the organization and stability of operations; and
10. Treating people non-judgmentally and equitably.

Vision

1. Committed to assisting people with HIV/AIDS to realize they have choices;
2. The Alliance for Living will meet members where they are and work to move them forward in their lives to a place where they are safe and comfortable;
3. People with HIV/AIDS have the resources to meet their medical, social, vocational, spiritual, and economic needs; and
4. Eliminate the stigma attached to HIV/AIDS.

Goals

1. Build an organization that works in partnership with members and supports the new strategic direction of the Alliance for Living.
2. Strengthen the delivery of HIV/AIDS service throughout New London County.
3. Develop new community partnerships and collaborations in order to strengthen and enhance services to people living with HIV/AIDS.
4. Increase public knowledge about the HIV/AIDS field and the Alliance for Living (its services, its members, and its work in the broader HIV/AIDS field).

The Importance of Volunteering

Volunteers make our dreams become a reality. Year after year, day after day, volunteers are very much part of our everyday life. In order to provide the highest quality services possible, we depend on the commitment of a strong corps of dedicated volunteers.

Not only do the actual services the volunteers provide assist us in continuing our work, but maybe even more importantly, when a volunteer contributes his or her time, talent, love to our program, they touch a very special place in the hearts of our staff and members. Their spirits inspire and motivate us in a way that cannot be counted on any form or record.

The Benefits of Volunteering

Thank you for choosing to volunteer at the Alliance for Living. As you share your time, talent, and skills in this partnership, we hope you will also recognize the many benefits that are available to you. Through your experience in this position, you can...

- Develop an understanding, knowledge and appreciation of our members
- Gain valuable experience
- Make use of your talents and abilities
- Achieve new skills
- Explore career possibilities
- Confront community issues
- Improve communication skills
- Request letters of reference
- Stimulate new friendships
- Participate in fitness center training

The Volunteer Protection Act of 1997

Responding to the growing hesitance of many Americans to volunteer for nonprofit organizations for fear of facing unwarranted lawsuits, Congress passed the Volunteer protection Act of 1997. The law makes sure that people who volunteer their services— whether it be through serving on a nonprofit's board of

directors or spending time at a local community center—can do so without worrying that their offer of free services ends up costing them in legal fees. The law’s key provisions include:

Liability Protection for Volunteers: With certain exceptions noted below, the law provides that volunteers for non-profit organizations or governmental entities cannot be sued for actions taken during their work for the organization or entity if:

1. the volunteer was acting within the scope of his or her responsibility;
2. if appropriate or required for the activities in which he or she was engaged, the volunteer was properly licensed or certified by the appropriate authorities;
3. the volunteer did not engage in willful or criminal misconduct, gross negligence, reckless misconduct, or conscious, flagrant indifference to the rights or safety of the individual harmed by the volunteer; and
4. the harm was not caused by the volunteer operating a motor vehicle, vessel, aircraft or other vehicle for which the State requires a license and insurance.

Volunteers Covered: The law covers volunteers for States and their subdivisions, as well as volunteers for nonprofit organizations. Nonprofit organizations entitled to the law’s protection include those exempt from taxation under Sections 501(a) and 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code and “any not-for-profit organization which is organized and conducted for public benefit and operated primarily for charitable, civic, educational, religious, welfare, or health purposes.”

No Punitive Damages Against Volunteers: The law provides that plaintiffs cannot collect punitive damages from volunteers unless the plaintiff establishes by clear and convincing evidence that the volunteer’s actions amounted to willful and criminal misconduct, or a conscious, flagrant indifference to the rights or safety of the individual harmed.

Exceptions to Liability Protection for Volunteers: The Volunteer Protection Act does *not* immunize volunteers from liability for crimes of violence, hate crimes, sexual offenses, violations of civil rights laws, or actions taken under the influences of alcohol or drugs.

Staff Volunteer Coordinator: The Director of Advancement or the Executive Director are responsible for recruiting, interviewing, orienting and recognizing volunteers. Once you have been interviewed and given a volunteer position, you will have a tour of the building and a general orientation. Other staff members, depending on your volunteer job description, will provide training and supervision for your assignment. Group orientation is also held yearly.

Dress Code: The Alliance for Living deals with individuals – members, their families, volunteers, representatives from other agencies and businesses, and donors – from a variety of backgrounds and lifestyles. Accordingly, there is no set manner of dress common to all agency interactions. Additionally, the Alliance for Living encourages volunteers to dress comfortably and in keeping with their own sense of style. However, there are some basic guidelines that should always be followed when dressing for volunteering. Attire should be clean and free of rips, tears and fraying. Clothing that **compromises commonly accepted ideas of modesty** – such as short-shorts, tube tops and halter-tops – are not allowed. Immodest displays of cleavage or other parts of the torso are also not allowed.

Boundaries: Boundaries assist in telling each of us where to go and where not to go. As a volunteer you are expected to have a friendly, but professional, relationship with members and staff. Please do not: offer counseling, give money or gifts, invite members to your home, give members personal or business telephone numbers, or do anything that makes you feel uncomfortable. Do not meet one-on-one in

private places, and if you hear stories highly critical of staff or the agency, please speak to the Program Manager. Anytime you have a question, speak to a staff member. “Ask first” is a good rule.

Volunteer Support:

Please do not hesitate to contact staff if you have any questions or concerns. We consider nothing too small and we are always pleased to be of assistance to you. If you want to learn more about HIV/AIDS, we have an extensive library of journals that you are welcome to borrow.

What is AIDS?

Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) is the name that has been given to describe the disease caused by the Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV). “Acquired” means that the problem is not inherited. “Immune Deficiency” refers to the breakdown of the body’s defense system. “Syndrome” means AIDS is not a single disease or illness, but a collection of symptoms or infections.

Nobody knows where HIV came from or how to rid a person of it. However, some drugs and alternative therapies appear to slow the reproduction of HIV, while others can prevent or treat infections that result from HIV disease.

A person can be infected with HIV if he or she comes into contact with HIV-infected blood, semen, vaginal fluids, or breast milk. The types of contact that transmit the virus are very intimate. HIV can only be transmitted through:

- Unprotected sex (vaginal, oral, anal)
- Shared needles
- From mother to child (during pregnancy, birth, breast feeding)

Despite the various routes of transmission, it is important to recognize that HIV is an extremely fragile virus. It is not spread through casual contact and it is not known to live long outside the body. You CANNOT get HIV from:

- Shaking hands
- Hugging or kissing
- Toilet seats
- Sharing a drinking glass
- Touching a doorknob
- Coughing or sneezing

As a volunteer at the Living Center, you will have no risk of contracting HIV. It is common to have fear or wonder, “Can I get HIV from being at the Living Center or from working with people there?” You should know, you should not be at any risk.

Universal Precautions: Treat all blood and bodily fluids as potentially infected

Please inform staff immediately! Do not ever attempt to clean up any bodily fluids on your own!

Use of disposable latex gloves

Gloves should always be worn when touching another person's blood. Gloves should also be worn while handling items or surfaces soiled by blood, semen or vaginal secretions. Gloves should be removed and disposed of after each use in the same fashion as soiled sanitary pads. They are to be placed in plastic bag with the top knotted, and then discarded. The person should also wash his or her hands before gloving and after disposing of gloves. All people, staff or volunteers, who come in contact with visible blood, should practice gloving.

Hand Washing

The washing of hands and skin is the single most effective health precaution for all viral and bacterial exposures. Use warm soapy water, wash before leaving the bathroom, eating, or handling food; wash all wounds; and wash between fingers. Washing skin and hands immediately after contact with another person's blood, semen or vaginal fluids is necessary. You should also wash your hands thoroughly after removing gloves.

Proper Covering of Wounds

Intact skin is the best barrier to infection. You should always cover open wounds or cuts with appropriate bandages. Small cuts should be covered with band-aids. Volunteers should always have access to a first aid kit that includes bandages and other materials for dressing wounds.

Using Bleach to Clean up Visible Blood & Bodily Fluids

This should be done with a fresh solution of one part bleach to ten parts water. Clorox is the best. Disposable latex gloves should be worn when cleaning up spills, particularly blood, semen, vomit and feces. This precaution, like most others, will protect you against a variety of infections in addition to HIV.

Cleaning Soiled Laundry

To dispose of laundry soiled with blood, semen, vaginal secretions, vomit, menstrual secretions, urine, and feces use leak proof bags and wash in water, which is 160 degrees or more, or use bleach (1/2 cup per load). Most laundry going through the dryer will be disinfected by the dryer's heat.

Confidentiality

As a volunteer you will learn and hear many personal things about Alliance members. Due to the sensitivity around HIV/AIDS, we expect that you will keep the information about members in strict confidence. This includes not divulging names, addresses or telephone numbers to those who are not directly involved with the program.

- If you are out in the community and run into a member, allow him/her to address you first. Individuals have different levels of comfort with disclosure. Respect them and don't take it personally if they do not acknowledge you.
- If you are out with a member and run into a friend, please do not identify the member as a person from the Alliance. It is acceptable to introduce the member by their first name.
- Please do not discuss identifying characteristics of members with your family or friends.
- There are confidentiality laws in Connecticut that protect people with HIV/AIDS. For further information please ask staff.

Information obtained from conversations (concerning members) should not be discussed with members or outsiders.

Some General "Do's"

- Treat all members, staff and other volunteers with respect.
- Listen to what members have to say. If something concerns you report it to a staff member. Do not enter into counseling with a member.
- If you are unsure of what to do, always talk with a staff member first.
- Respect boundaries- they exist for the benefit of all.
- Honor commitments to show up- members, staff and other volunteers count on you. If you cannot come in for your assigned shift, please call as far in advance as possible.
- When checking personal belongings, keep any valuables with you.
- **Please always sign in and out in the volunteer log book located in the reception area!**

Smoking

The Living Center is a smoke free environment. If you need to smoke, please do so only in the designated area in the rear of the building. **Do not give cigarettes to members or young volunteers.** Thank you for your cooperation.

Enjoy yourself, and enjoy getting to know the people around you. Know that you make a difference in the lives of Alliance members. What you do assists members in reaching their goals and assists staff in doing their jobs.

Thank You!!

HANDBOOK AGREEMENT FORM

I have read and understand the Volunteer Handbook.

I agree to abide by the policies set forth in this handbook.

I understand that not following the outline of the handbook may lead to my dismissal as a volunteer at Alliance for Living, Inc.

I will sign in and out of the Volunteer Sign-in Book each day that I am here. I understand this is how Alliance tracks my volunteer time. If the sign in sheet is incomplete, I do not hold Alliance for Living, Inc. responsible for hours missing on any report regarding my hours served.

Signed _____ **Date** _____

Print Name here _____

Witnessed _____ **Date** _____