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COVENANT HOUSE OVERVIEW

Covenant House International

Covenant House is the largest privately-funded, non-profit child care agency in the United States providing food, shelter, emergency and support services to at-risk youth. It was incorporated in New York City in 1972, and has since expanded to 31 cities across six countries.

Covenant House provides multiple forms of direct assistance and intervention services to abused, neglected, homeless, and at-risk youth including street outreach, health care, academic remediation, vocational training, job placement, substance abuse treatment and prevention programs, advocacy and legal services, recreation, and aftercare.

Covenant House Missouri

Covenant House Missouri (CHMO) began a small street outreach program in St. Louis in 1997 for homeless youth. For more than 20 years, CHMO has openly accepted youth experiencing homelessness and has provided personalized solutions to guide them from homelessness to hope. Still today, though, as many as 2,000 unaccompanied youth are homeless in the state of Missouri every night. As the only nonprofit organization dedicated to serving homeless, runaway, and at-risk youth in the city of St. Louis, CHMO continues to be a place of unconditional love, hope, and support for our community’s most vulnerable youth.

CHMO offers a combination of support strategies, including outreach, residential services, educational programs, job training and placement, medical services, and mental health counseling. We take a holistic approach when we partner with our youth to ensure each individual meets their goals for the future. Within our facility, we have 36 beds available between our 30-day Genesis Program and our Transitional Living Program to provide sanctuary to our youth as they develop skills to live independently and work on finding life beyond the streets. We also offer basic necessities, employment services, and support to more than 150 youth in the surrounding St. Louis City community to assist their long-term success and well-being. Ultimately, our goal is that every youth exits our programs to stable housing and moves towards an independent, sustainable future.
MISSION STATEMENT

To protect and safeguard all youth with dignity and love and to offer the structure necessary for youth who are homeless and disconnected to pursue a life of opportunity.

THE COVENANT HOUSE PHILOSOPHY

To lead change that challenges and inspires youth to pursue a life of opportunity, independence, and possibilities.

Immediacy

Covenant House immediately meets the basic needs of youth experiencing homelessness through a nourishing meal, a shower, clean clothes, medical attention, and a safe place to sleep.

Sanctuary

Covenant House provides a safe haven from the hardships of homelessness. We recognize the fundamental worth of every human being, and create a safe setting where all youth – regardless of life experience or identity – are served without judgement.

Value Communication

Covenant House leads by example to demonstrate that caring relationships are based on love, trust, respect, and honesty.

Structure

Covenant House provides the stability and structure necessary to build a positive future.

Choice

Covenant House fosters confidence; encouraging young people to believe in themselves and make informed choices for their lives.
POLICY STATEMENT ON THE
RECRUITMENT AND PLACEMENT OF VOLUNTEERS

The Covenant House Missouri Volunteer program acts as a support for staff and clients in augmenting and enhancing the provision of services rendered to the youth we serve.

Persons are recruited based on the needs of the agency and its clients. In any act of volunteer service there must be mutual benefits for all parties involved. Therefore, in placing volunteers we seek to meet the needs of the agency, the clients and the volunteers.

Before being officially accepted as a volunteer, all individuals are required to complete an application, sign a liability waiver, and a confidentiality agreement. Volunteers whose assignments require them to work one on one with youth unsupervised will be subject to a background check and will participate in an interview with the Events and Volunteer Coordinator and other appropriate staff.

There are two general types of volunteer work, although volunteers may do both at different times. These are direct care and support services. Direct care includes any job that works directly with youth - activities such as tutoring a youth or program supervision. Support services include jobs such as providing food, maintaining our clothing room, or clerical support.

The acceptance and placement of volunteers is based on their willingness to accept our mission and principles, their talents, abilities, time availability, and the agency needs at the time of their application. Each volunteer is assigned to a department supervisor with whom schedules and schedule changes are to be determined and approved.

Volunteers may be utilized in all programs and activities of Covenant House Missouri and serve at all levels of skill. Volunteers will not, however, be utilized to displace any paid employee from his or her position, to make or interpret policy decisions, or to alter or amend any youth’s individual service plan.
COVENANT HOUSE MISSOURI
VOLUNTEER POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

NOTE: All volunteers are the responsibility of the Advancement Department. If at any time you wish to change your area of volunteer service, please notify the Events and Volunteer Coordinator.

Equal Opportunity:

It is the policy of Covenant House Missouri to provide equal opportunities to all qualified volunteers and prospective volunteers. We welcome every race, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, or expression.

Application Renewal:

Once a volunteer application is accepted, it is valid for one year. After one year, each volunteer must fill out a new volunteer application to make sure all information is up to date and background checks (if required) are not expired.

Training:

Volunteers may attend any workshops offered by the Agency with the approval of their direct supervisor and the Events and Volunteer Coordinator. Training specific to the volunteer’s positions will be provided by his/her direct supervisor and/or staff within the department to which they are assigned on an as needed basis.

Personnel Records:

Volunteers must notify the Events and Volunteer Coordinator of any changes to their address, telephone numbers, or availability.

What to Wear:

You will be serving as a role model for our youth, so it is important to dress appropriately. If you are working in an administrative role, business casual is best. In other areas such as food service, recreation, or maintenance, casual or work attire is in order. Please use your best judgement.

Recording Volunteer Hours:

It is important that you record your time volunteered at Covenant House Missouri. We maintain a record of volunteer service hours for our quarterly reports, and it also enables us to keep an accurate record of the considerable contribution made by our volunteers. There will be Volunteer Sign-In Logs at the front desk of Covenant House. Please sign in anytime you have volunteer hours.
Accidents in the Workplace:

Any injury or accident which occurs while a volunteer is either on assignment or on the premises must be immediately be reported to his/her supervisor and the Events and Volunteer Coordinator.

Personal Property:

Covenant House Missouri is not responsible for loss or damage of personal property. Valuable items or items with sentimental value should be left at home. Please ensure that your personal belongings are left in a safe and secure place while on site. Your supervisor can advise you of an appropriate storage area.

Smoking:

At CHMO, smoking is prohibited in all indoor facilities. Please take all smoking outside in the parking lot and dispose of any refuse appropriately. Thank you for your cooperation.

Drug-Free Workplace:

Covenant House Missouri is a drug-free workplace. All volunteers are hereby on notice that it is unlawful to manufacture, distribute, possess, or use an unlawful controlled substance in our workplace.

Harassment:

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that, in the workplace, no one unlawfully harasses another individual; it is not to regulate our personal morality or conduct. It is the policy of the agency to prohibit harassment of or by an employee, supervisor, volunteer, or any person doing business with the agency, and to commit to maintain a work environment that is free from unlawful harassment. Anyone who feels that s/he has been subjected to sexual or any other form of harassment should immediately report the matter to her/his supervisor and Events and Volunteer Coordinator. Every report will be investigated and corrective action taken where appropriate.

Evaluation:

Each volunteer will have an opportunity to complete an electronic feedback form to help evaluate the volunteer experience. A volunteer may at any time request a meeting with the Events and Volunteer Coordinator to address any questions or concerns that may arise.

Child Abuse:

Volunteers will immediately report any suspected child abuse to the Events and Volunteer Coordinator. Appropriate action will be taken.
Confidentiality:

Information regarding the admission, shelter, or services of any Covenant House Missouri client is confidential and protected under federal laws and regulations. The client’s very presence in the program is confidential information.

In addition, any phone conversations, records, any information you may hear, or personal situations revealed to you may not be discussed outside of the work situation. Releasing information and/or identifying a person as a client, verbally or in writing, other than through prescribed procedures is a serious matter and is cause for disciplinary action.

Volunteers may not discuss an individual client, give files or medical record information (or any portion thereof), or give any shelter or outreach center information whatsoever to any unauthorized person, including Covenant House Missouri staff who do not normally have access to such information.

Every person volunteering at Covenant House Missouri must comply with the confidentiality policies and procedures, and will be required to sign a confidentiality agreement.

Representation of Covenant House Missouri:

Volunteers (and staff) who wish to represent Covenant House Missouri and its programs by speaking with others on a formal basis must obtain clearance through the Marketing and Communications Department. Anyone seeking to publish articles on Covenant House Missouri should obtain prior consent from the Executive Director and the Advancement Department. No staff member or volunteer is permitted to make any statement to the media without clearance.

Donations and Gifts:

Any gifts for the use of Covenant Missouri House clients (e.g., clothing, food, toiletries, etc.) are not to be used by volunteers for personal use. Cash donations should only be accepted by staff in the development or executive offices. To ensure that individuals representing Covenant House Missouri are not placed in positions where their judgement may be influenced, money, gifts from vendors, suppliers, contractors, or other persons doing business with Covenant House Missouri should not be accepted by volunteers.

Dismissal of a Volunteer:

Volunteers who do not adhere to the rules and procedures of Covenant House Missouri or who fail to satisfactorily perform their volunteer assignments are subject to dismissal. No volunteer will be terminated until he/she has had an opportunity to discuss their reasons for dismissal with the Events and Volunteer Coordinator and any relevant supervisory staff. Except in extreme cases, volunteers will be given a period of time to rectify any problems before dismissal.
PROFESSIONAL COURTESIES

Use of Telephone:

Volunteers are requested to keep personal calls to a minimum. These calls should not interfere with the normal workflow or the services provided to our clients.

Punctuality:

If you are not arriving at your previously scheduled time, please notify the Events and Volunteer Coordinator and/or your supervisor as far in advance as possible so that they may be able to make alternate scheduling arrangements. CHMO relies upon your dependability. Also, you are serving as a positive role model for our youth, so please try to be on time.

Absences:

Volunteers should notify the Events and Volunteer Coordinator and/or their staff supervisor at least 24 hours in advance of any need to cancel their allotted volunteer shift. This enables us to find a replacement or reschedule if possible.

Saying Good-Bye:

If a long-term volunteer must leave their position with Covenant House Missouri, both their staff supervisor and the Events and Volunteer Coordinator should be notified as soon as possible. A confidential exit interview will be arranged with the Events and Volunteer Coordinator in order to evaluate their experience.
CLIENT RELATIONSHIP GUIDELINES FOR VOLUNTEERS

NOTE: The following guidelines, although good to know for everyone, are more for volunteers who work directly one-on-one with our youth. These guidelines will help direct care volunteers communicate and relate effectively with our youth in accordance with the Covenant House Missouri principles and agency policies.

- Build solid relationships with our youth by being a good listener. An attentive ear can work miracles.

- Respect the dignity of our clients and help them to feel important and cared about. Helping them to build their self-esteem is one of the most important things you can do to help the youth we serve.

- Accept clients as they are. As a volunteer, it is not your responsibility to change the habits, attitudes or lifestyle of a client. Be accepting and non-judgmental and help clients to focus on the positive aspects of their lives.

- Respect the privacy and personal property of our clients.

- Look beyond any hostile or negative behavior, which may be exhibited by a client. Do not take it personally. Instead, recognize that feelings of anger or depression are a logical consequence of the past experiences of many of our clients. Such feelings may be lessened by patience and understanding on the part of a caring adult.

The volunteer relationship with our clients must occur solely within the confines of Covenant House Missouri. Sanctuary and confidentiality are essential in order to build a relationship of trust with the youth we serve. They are also necessary to protect the safety of both our clients and volunteers. As such, volunteers are asked as part of their commitment, to adhere to the following procedures:

- Do not identify clients or discuss personal information about clients outside the agency or with other clients.

- Do not agree to meet clients outside of Covenant House Missouri’s buildings.

- Do not engage in physical contact with clients.

- Do not disclose your home or business address or telephone numbers to clients.

- Do not purchase items for, give, or lend money to clients.

- Do not transport clients in your own vehicle without the approval of the Executive Director.
GRIEVANCE PROCEDURES FOR VOLUNTEERS

Covenant House Missouri (CHMO) is committed to providing volunteers with the best possible experience. This grievance policy is in place for any volunteer to express concerns of perceived inequities, unfair treatment, or dissatisfaction with agency actions or behaviors.

I. Purpose

This goal of this policy is to provide a fair and impartial grievance process to ensure that volunteer concerns are heard and addressed.

II. Definition

What Constitutes a Grievance: A grievance is a complaint based upon an actual or perceived situation in which the person believes there is just cause for protest or disagreement.

III. Policies and Procedures

1) Try to resolve the problem/ grievance directly with the person(s) involved.

2) If a positive resolution cannot be reached, discuss the issue with the Events and Volunteer Coordinator. He/she will take the necessary actions to resolve the issues with the person(s) concerned.

3) If the conflict has still not been resolved satisfactorily, the volunteer must submit grievance in writing to the Events and Volunteer Coordinator AND the Director of Advancement within 10 days of the original incident. The statement should include a detailed summary of the problem/ incident and the measures already taken to resolve the issue. An investigation of the problem/ incident will then commence and new solutions will be implemented.

4) If the volunteer is still unsatisfied with the actions taken, the case will be sent to the Chief Operating Officer for further investigation and action. The volunteer may be subject to an interview by the Chief Operating Officer at this stage to make sure the incident is being taken care of in a fair, equitable manner for all parties involved.
NAMES FOR VOLUNTEERS TO KNOW

Chief Executive Officer  Jessica Erfling
Chief Operating Officer  Julia Treece
Director of Advancement  Colleen Daum
Director of Finance & Administration  John Magner
Director of Human Resources  Rob Boyd
Director of Support Services  Rob Donnelly
Events & Volunteer Coordinator  Kirsten Brauch
Marketing & Communications Specialist  Ramona Curtis
Executive Assistant  Rachael Lancey