

# Volunteer Handbook



1665 Elk Boulevard  
Des Plaines, IL 60016

(847)823-0453

[concern@centerofconcern.org](mailto:concern@centerofconcern.org)

# Table of Contents

---

Introduction . . . . . 3

Volunteer Overview . . . . . 4

Volunteer Guidelines . . . . . 5

Volunteer Benefits, Rights, and Responsibilities. . . . . 7

Center of Concern Policies . . . . . 9

## **Introduction**

---

Welcome to volunteering with the Center of Concern! As a volunteer, you are joining many others who have worked to support and grow our mission. Volunteers play an important role in the development, growth, and day-to-day workings of our agency. As you serve with your time, talents, and energy, we hope you know that this important gift will permanently benefit our entire community.

This handbook will provide information to help you get started at the Center of Concern. Please read it carefully and let us know if you have any questions. We look forward to having you on our team! Thank you for volunteering and helping provide the best services to our clients.

## **Our Mission**

The Center of Concern provides housing solutions, support services, and counseling for older adults, persons with disabilities, and others in need, enabling them to live with dignity and independence.

## **Office Hours**

Monday – Thursday: 9:00 AM – 4:30 PM

Friday: 9:00 AM – 12:00 PM

Evenings and Saturdays: By Appointment

## **Volunteer Overview**

---

Your primary contact will be our Volunteer Coordinator. All volunteers receive hands-on training by our staff, which includes training for the responsibilities you will be performing, as well as familiarization with the Center of Concern's programs and staffing. The time commitment ranges from 1 to 2 days a week to an occasional morning or afternoon. Whatever time you can give the Center of Concern is most appreciated. We will work with you to make volunteering a possibility.

### **Placement, Training, and Supervision**

During the interview process, volunteer interest in the organization's needs will be considered to insure the best placement match. When possible, the volunteer will have the final say in determining which volunteer position best fits their needs based on availability and the current needs of the Center of Concern.

All volunteers are supervised by the Volunteer Coordinator. Volunteers will be trained one-on-one by the appropriate staff working with the particular program or service.

### **Recording Volunteer Hours**

It is very important to record and report your volunteer hours by phone, letter, email, or on our website (<http://centerofconcern.org/volunteer>) so that the time and energy you have given is documented.

### **Holiday Schedule**

The Center of Concern releases a schedule for each calendar year. Typically, the following holidays are observed:

- New Year's Day
- Martin Luther King, Jr. Day
- President's Day

- Memorial Day
- Independence Day (July 4<sup>th</sup>)
- Labor Day
- Columbus Day
- Thanksgiving Day
- Friday after Thanksgiving
- Christmas Eve
- Christmas Day
- Afternoon of New Year's Eve

### **Age Limitation**

Volunteers under the age of 18 must have the written consent of a parent or guardian before volunteering. In some cases, volunteers under the age of 18 must be accompanied by a parent or guardian.

### **Background Checks**

A criminal records background check is required for all volunteer assignments, and every volunteer must pass this check prior to their assignment.

## **Volunteer Guidelines**

---

### **Personal Appearance**

While we respect your individuality, your neat appearance is important for maintaining a professional atmosphere and leaving a favorable impression with our clients and visitors. While it is difficult to describe appropriate and acceptable business attire in a rapidly changing world of fashion, we expect you to use good

judgment. Your clothing should be tasteful, clean, neat, and appropriate for your duties. Clothing with obscene or inappropriate language is not allowed.

## **Absences**

As a volunteer, our office staff and clients are relying on you. If you are feeling ill or your plans have changed, please call your senior client or Volunteer Coordinator with as much notice as possible.

## **Volunteer Performance Problems and Termination**

The following are considered to be serious violations and are grounds for termination of volunteer duties:

- Falsifying reports, records, or expenses
- Sharing confidential client information
- Negligent or willful damage of property
- Theft
- Willfully endangering the safety of others
- Working under the influence of intoxicants

## **Safety**

We work hard to have a clean, comfortable, and safe working environment for all of our employees, volunteers, and clients. We expect you to properly maintain Center of Concern property and individual work areas. You are responsible for conducting yourself in a responsible manner to help promote your safety and the safety of your fellow employees and volunteers. Immediately report any accident, injury, or illness, regardless of its size or significance, to the Volunteer Coordinator or the Executive Director.

## **Professional Services**

Volunteers shall not complete duties requiring certification or licensing unless they are currently certified. A copy of certification or licensing must be maintained by the Volunteer Coordinator prior to completing these duties.

## **Tax Deductible Expenses**

Volunteers should consult with their tax advisor regarding possible deductions and you may wish to keep a personal record of deductible expenses.

## **Volunteer Protection Act of 1977**

If a volunteer is involved in an accident while carrying out a volunteer assignment, you may be protected under certain circumstances from liability under the Volunteer Protection Act of 1977.

## **Volunteer Benefits, Rights, and Responsibilities**

---

Many of our volunteers tell us that their biggest reward comes from helping others. Our programs offer many benefits to volunteers such as:

- Serve as an active and vital member of our community
- Make new friends and being of service to others
- Support the staff so that they have more time to provide service to their clients
- Have an opportunity to refresh old skills and gain new ones

- Reduce taxpayer expense by supporting a volunteer-based entity in place of a government-funded program

## **Volunteer Rights**

Volunteers are viewed as the most valuable resource for the staff and clients of the Center of Concern. You will:

- Be given tasks that use and develop your education, talent, and skills
- Be given adequate information and training to carry out your assignments
- Receive guidance and supervision by a staff member
- Be able to freely discuss problems, ask questions, or make suggestions
- Have a written job description and have a designated place to work

Volunteers have the right to be given meaningful assignments and the right to receive effective supervision. In return, volunteers shall agree to perform their duties to the best of their abilities.

## **Volunteer Responsibilities**

As a volunteer, your schedule is typically flexible, but you must be prepared to fulfill all of your volunteer commitments including:

- Only accept assignments that you feel you can reasonably complete
- Learn about the Center of Concern's programs
- Accept the guidance and direction of the Volunteer Coordinator and/or staff supervisor
- Participate in any required training
- Respect confidentiality
- Be punctual
- Be alert, sober, and drug-free while volunteering
- Report your volunteer hours



## **Center of Concern Policies**

---

### **Equal Employment Opportunity**

The Center of Concern does not discriminate against any employee, applicant, or volunteer because of race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, national origin, age, disability, genetic information, marital status, military discharge status, or veteran status. This policy shall include, but not be limited to, the following:

- Recruitment and employment
- Benefits administration
- Administration of social and recreational programs
- Promotion
- Demotion
- Transfer
- Layoff or termination
- Compensation
- Selection for training, educational opportunities, or apprenticeship

If you feel that you have been discriminated against in any respect, you should immediately contact the Volunteer Coordinator.

### **Anti-Harassment Policy**

The Center of Concern does not tolerate harassment of its employees, volunteers, or independent contractors. Any form of harassment or discriminatory practice will be treated as a disciplinary matter.

## **Sexual Harassment**

One form of prohibited harassment is sexual harassment. Sexual harassment is illegal under federal, state, and local laws, and is prohibited at the Center of Concern. Forms of sexual harassment may include, but are not limited to:

- Subtle or overt pressure for sexual favors
- Derogatory or vulgar statements regarding one's sexuality or gender
- Unnecessary touching, patting, pinching or attention to one's body
- Physical assault
- Unwanted sexual compliments, innuendoes, or suggestions
- Turning work discussions into sexual topics
- Displaying visual materials that are sexually suggestive
- Making suggestive or insulting gestures or noises
- Reciting sexual jokes or stories

## **Other Harassment**

Harassment may include ethnic, religious, or racial slurs, jokes, or other verbal or physical conduct relating to an individual's national origin, disability, religion, gender, color, race, protected activity, or age when this conduct:

- Has the purpose or effect of creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive work environment
- Has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's work performance
- Otherwise adversely affects an individual's employment opportunities

The Center of Concern will discipline employees or volunteers who engage in the activities defined above. Also, the Center of Concern will not allow our

employees, volunteers, or independent contractors to work at a location where they are subjected to harassment.

### **Anti-Violence Policy**

The Center of Concern seeks to provide a safe workplace that is free from hazards or threats. Violence will not be tolerated in the workplace. This includes employees, volunteers, clients, subcontractors, vendors, and visitors. All employees and volunteers are expected to conduct themselves in a manner that will maintain a workplace that is free of violence or threat of violence.

This policy is intended to cover any behavior that constitutes violence or threat of violence including, but not limited to, the following:

- Physical fighting, including pushing, shoving, hitting, or in any way deliberately hurting a co-worker, customer, vendor, or visitor
- Destruction or sabotage of personal or Center of Concern property
- A verbal or written statement that indicates intent to hurt a co-worker, customer, vendor, or visitor
- Belligerent conduct including swearing and persistent loud, angry statements made to or in the presence of a co-worker, customer, vendor, or visitor

An employee who witnesses an act of violence or a threat of violence should report the incident immediately without fear of repercussions. All incidents should be reported to the Executive Director who will promptly investigate. Confidentiality will be maintained for all employees who report incidents.

## **Open-Door Policy**

All employees and volunteers must be treated fairly and equitably. A volunteer who has a problem, question, or complaint may utilize the Open-Door Policy. The general process is as follows:

- Most job-related problems can and should be resolved directly between the volunteer and immediate supervisor.
- If the problem cannot be resolved with the supervisor, the volunteer should schedule a session to review the issue with the Volunteer Coordinator.
- The Volunteer Coordinator will conduct a full examination of the facts and a decision shall be communicated to the volunteer.

## **Technology Policy**

Staff and volunteers are encouraged to use technology to further the mission and goals of the Center of Concern. As a user of these systems, you have access to valuable tools, sensitive data, and internal and external networks. Consequently, it is important for you to behave in a responsible, ethical, and legal manner.

All technology items, including all software, databases, hardware, and digital files, remain the sole property of the Center of Concern and are to be used only for business and not for any personal use. The Center of Concern reserves the right to access and review electronic files, messages, e-mail, and other digital archives, and to monitor or filter the use of electronic communications as necessary to ensure that no misuse or violation of Center of Concern policy or any law occurs.

- Do not share passwords. The Center of Concern will override passwords, if necessary, for any reason.
- Only use computers, system accounts, and files that you are authorized to access.

- Employees and volunteers may not install any software or unauthorized files on any Center of Concern computer system. All installations must be authorized and approved by the Executive Director.
- All staff and volunteers must abide by all federal, state, and local laws.
- Electronic communication and media may not be used in any manner that would be discriminatory, harassing, or obscene.

## **Confidentiality**

Many of us at The Center of Concern are entrusted with confidential client information. We all depend on each other to be trustworthy and honest with the ethical responsibility to treat our clients with the highest degree of confidentiality. The following precautions must be observed for information in hard copy:

- Whenever possible, avoid removing reports, files, etc. from our buildings.
- Keep confidential information in secure locations, such as locked cabinets or file rooms.
- Use care when disposing confidential reports. Certain information requires shredding or retention.

## **Searches and Investigations**

The Center of Concern reserves the right to conduct searches of staff and volunteers and their personal belongings while on Center of Concern property. This includes desks, lockers, vehicles, packages, toolkits, bags, briefcases, as well as voice mail, computers, software, e-mail, digital storage, and other media. Failure or refusal to consent to a search when requested may result in discipline including immediate discharge of your volunteer duties.

## **Whistle-Blower Protection**

The Center of Concern is committed to maintaining the highest standards of conduct and ethical behavior. We promote a working environment that values respect, fairness, and integrity. All employees, board members, and volunteers must act with honesty, integrity, and openness in all of their dealings as representatives for the Center of Concern. Failure to uphold these standards will result in disciplinary action including possible termination of employment, dismissal from board or volunteer duties, and possible civil and criminal prosecution.

Employees, board members, consultants, and volunteers are encouraged to report suspected fraudulent or dishonest conduct to the Executive Director or a member of the Board of Directors (i.e. to act as a whistle-blower). Reports may be made anonymously.

The Center of Concern will ensure that whistle-blowers are protected from retaliation to the full extent possible. Names will be held in confidence unless disclosure is required for the investigation, or if disciplinary or legal action is taken. Additionally, no adverse actions, including threats of physical harm, loss of job, punitive work assignments, or impact on salary or fees, will be taken against a whistle-blower who reports activity they believe to be fraudulent or dishonest.

Whistle-blowers who believe they have been retaliated against may file a written complaint with the Executive Director or any member of the Board of Directors. Any complaint of retaliation will be promptly investigated, and appropriate corrective actions taken if the allegations are substantiated.

## **No Solicitation, No Distribution**

To avoid annoyance and interference with our operations, no employee or volunteer is permitted to distribute literature or solicit other employees for any purpose during working time. However, during non-working time, employees may distribute literature in non-working areas (such as the lunchroom).

## **Drug-Free Workplace and Substance Abuse**

The Center of Concern abides by the Drug-Free Workplace Act of 1988. Substance abuse poses a serious threat to the health and well-being of employees and volunteers, and to the operation of the organization. The Center of Concern maintains a substance-free, safe, and healthful working environment for all staff.

The unlawful manufacture, possession, distribution, dispensation, or use of controlled substances (as defined by the Controlled Substance Act) by staff or volunteers in the workplace or on the premises is prohibited. This policy excludes a doctor's prescription when used as prescribed. Violations of this policy will result in disciplinary action, up to and including discharge, and may have legal consequences.

Employees must not use alcohol during working hours. For the purpose of this policy, "working hours" include the scheduled workday as well as breaks and periods. In some cases, use of alcohol during approved Center of Concern functions may be an exception from this policy.

## **Gun and Weapons Policy**

While on Center of Concern property, or while at a client's residence, volunteers may not possess or use any weapon including guns.