

# **Volunteering and Lending a Hand: A Guide for Volunteer Support and Community Engagement**

## **What You Need to Know:**

### **There are three ways to become involved at the Morrison Gardens Community House:**

**1)** Some volunteers are screened and placed through partner organizations that provide service in the Community House (i.e. Food Bank, City of Ottawa, Ottawa Community Housing (OCH), faith-based programs and more). These volunteers report to their host organizations. We ask them to become familiar with this document.

**2)** Some students and volunteers are screened and placed through Pinecrest-Queensway Community Health Centre (PQCHC). These students and volunteers are screened through PQCHC, adhere to PQCHC volunteer policies and report directly to the Community House Coordinator. We ask them to become familiar with this document.

**3)** Community helpers (i.e. connected with community house and/or family members) offer their time/energy to the community house in a number of ways (i.e. House Board members, supporting Community House programs and events). They are accountable to the community and supported by the Community House Coordinator. Seasoned community leaders also play a role to mentor peers. In some cases, they are also supported by other organizations.

The following chart describes community member roles (detailed job descriptions are also available):

Role	Description	Orientation Checklist	Peer Shadowing
Community Navigators	Navigators: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have experience and training;</li> <li>• Wear lanyards for scheduled shifts; and,</li> <li>• Make referrals to resources.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Volunteering and Lending a Hand at the Morrison Gardens Community House: What you Need to Know</li> <li>• Safe People Training</li> <li>• Signed confidentiality forms</li> <li>• Crisis Cards</li> <li>• Referral resources</li> </ul>	<div style="text-align: center;">  <p>SHADOWING</p> </div>
Community Leaders	Community leaders: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lead events/groups and host discussions with Community House Coordinator in proximity</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Volunteering and Lending a Hand at the Morrison Gardens Community House: What you Need to Know</li> <li>• Signed confidentiality forms</li> </ul>	
Community Ambassadors	Community Ambassadors support activities including; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Outreach;</li> <li>• the 'walking community house';</li> <li>• set up and take down;</li> <li>• On call to support events/activities.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Volunteering and Lending a Hand at the Morrison Gardens Community House: What you Need to Know</li> <li>• Signed confidentiality forms</li> </ul>	

### **Other Volunteer Groups:**

Please note that other groups (i.e. Tenant Circle) are independent from the Community House. For example, the Tenant Circle receives support from OCH.

### **The purpose of this Volunteer and Community Helper support project is to:**

- Formalize volunteer/community helper relationships with the Community House;
- Create a better frame for volunteer/community helper supervision and support;
- Support volunteers/community helpers to set boundaries; and
- Ensure that volunteers/community helpers are visible, so that community members know who they can approach for support in the Community House.

In 2016, community leaders identified the need to better support volunteers and community helpers at the Morrison Gardens Community House. In creating this guide, our goal was to strengthen our capacity to support diversity and inclusion. We want everyone who walks into the Community House to feel welcome. It is our goal to provide excellent service.

This document is for volunteers and community helpers who step into roles to support community engagement (including programs and services). We ask that all volunteers and community helpers in the Morrison Gardens Community House make themselves familiar with this guide. If you have any questions, please connect with the Community House Coordinator.

### **Shared Vision:**

We have created a shared vision for volunteering and community engagement, which you will see posted in the Community House. This vision will be used to support you to evaluate your own performance, and to support you in setting appropriate boundaries.

The time, talent, support and energy contributed by volunteers and community helpers enhance both what we do together and how we do it. Volunteers and community helpers build community.

We believe that volunteering has the potential to:

- Promote change through the collective efforts of those living in the neighbourhood;
- Ensure that everyone has a voice and space to contribute;
- Connect people to each other and the causes they care about;
- Promote active participation that will shape our neighbourhood;
- Build on neighbourhood strengths to respond to arising challenges
- Reach out to a large number of community members from different age groups, cultures and socio-economic backgrounds;
- Increase a sense of belonging and well-being; and to,
- Ensure that we can achieve our goals that matter to everyone.

Your volunteer efforts make us stronger, more dynamic and diverse.

It is our goal to welcome and support as many volunteers as we can, including those on the road to recovery, students, youth, seniors, and those needing community hours and more.

**Visibility:**

Navigators wear lanyards to distinguish them as people in ‘a position of trust’ that are trained to provide information about services and can help navigate resources. Lanyards will be stored in the office and a sign in/sign out board is located in the dining room. Navigators will make an effort to check-in briefly at the end of a shift with staff for an informal debrief. Anything urgent will be dealt with as quickly as possible.

At community events, all volunteers and community helpers should be identifiable. We may ask that all volunteers wear the same coloured shirts and/or wear nametags and/or buttons to identify them as an ‘event volunteer’ or other helper.

## **How to get involved:**

The Morrison Gardens Community House strives to engage volunteers and community helpers who are representative of the neighbourhood and the communities served.

If you are interested in applying, please contact community house staff by phone, email, in person. You will be provided an application.

After you apply and drop your application form, you will be contacted and there will be a conversation about our Community House needs and where your skills would be a good fit. We want to ensure that all individuals involved are in line with our vision and that your goals and interests are a good fit for the Community House. If we are not able to accept your offer to assist at this time, we will make every effort to refer you to other opportunities.

If you become a volunteer of the Morrison Gardens Community House, you will receive a folder with the following orientation resources.

- Volunteer Vision Statement
- Emergency card
- Do you need someone to talk to – Crisis referral #'s
- Confidentiality agreement
- Code of Conduct agreement

You can approach your supervisor with any questions. If your application is successful, we will develop a job description based on your interests, time availability and goals. Your supervisor will supervise your position and self-assessment expectations for your position.

## **Supervision and Support:**

- You can expect Community House staff and peer leaders to provide you with orientation, support signing the required documents, links with training where possible, on site supervision, support and guidance, observation and timely feedback, and opportunities to develop your skills.

- The Community House Shared Vision was created by the community and will be used to help you assess your performance. Community House staff will refer to this as a guide for your performance.
- If one is acting in a way that is not in line with the Shared Vision, the Community House Coordinator will do a check in. This will serve as a reminder about the purpose of the Shared Vision, and to check if additional support is needed. Unacceptable behaviour will be clearly identified. Repeated reminders may lead to dismissal.
- Please connect with the Community House Coordinator if you are interested in training opportunities, such as through the Safe People Project.

**You have the right to:**

- Orientation to your position, Community House culture and ongoing supervision;
- A positive, safe, non-discriminatory, inclusive and diverse environment;
- Reasonable accommodation to meet unique and identified needs;
- Ongoing communication that is open, honest;
- Be treated with dignity and have your opinions respected;
- Resolution of conflict that is timely;
- Evaluate Community House practices, programs, staff and your position;
- Ongoing recognition for your contribution;
- Involvement in decisions that affect you;
- Identify any potential conflicts of interest and identify appropriate boundaries; and to,
- Ask for support when needed.

**You have a responsibility to:**

- Honour and maintain confidentiality;
- Orient yourself to this guide;
- Make sure that you abide by the Morrison Gardens Shared Vision, which was created by community members;

- Evaluate and give feedback about your volunteer placement by participating in a self-assessment;
- Where possible, to participate in relevant meetings, orientation or training sessions;
- Arrive in a state of mind in which you are ready to Perform your duties to the best of your ability;
- To learn and ask questions about any assignment given;
- Communicate with your supervisor if you need support or have an idea;
- Honour your volunteer commitments and provide enough notice if you cannot make your shift;
- Respect the opinions of others, treat others with dignity, care and respect and act with fairness, honesty, integrity and openness;
- Welcome all of the diverse people who access the Community House and be empathetic to individual and group differences;
- Communicate with your supervisor if you think another volunteer or staff may be in need of support to realign with the volunteer vision.

### **Risk Management and Taking Care of Yourself:**

It is important that you are aware of the risks and boundaries associated with your volunteer position.

The Morrison Gardens Community House encourages professional, respectful and friendly relations between volunteers and those they serve while maintaining appropriate boundaries. Please connect with your Community House Coordinator if you think that there may be a conflict of interest related to your volunteer work.

For those of you who are community members, you are wearing multiple hats. Please ensure that you are conscious of your behaviour when you step into the role of volunteering at the Community House, and ensure that you are setting appropriate boundaries for yourself. You have the right to be off duty and can set boundaries when you are not volunteering.

People have different beliefs, cultural practices and comfort levels. A good practice is to let other people lead and follow their practice. You can also communicate your own comfort level. For example, some people are not comfortable shaking hands. You can make them comfortable by following their lead (i.e. let them be the first to reach out and shake hands). If you are uncomfortable shaking hands, you can also set a boundary.

### *Risk Management: Child/Youth Programs*

All children and youth programs must be staff led and must comply with legislated child/youth ratios, as per the law. As a volunteer, make sure that you are never alone with children or youth. For those volunteering in Child and Youth programs, a Police Records Check for the vulnerable sector is required.

### *Risk Management: Adult Programs and Services*

When it comes to adult programs and services, the standard practice is for staff to be present in the Community House. In some circumstances, 2 navigators can host community discussions and/or groups without staff present. These navigators will have a 'crisis wallet card', with contact information for the Community House Coordinator. These volunteer led shifts will be scheduled in advance and be pre-approved.

### **How to handle emergencies:**

Community House staff will play a lead role to respond to emergencies. In a case where Community House Staff are not available, here is the process to follow.

- Call 911(if needed) or push panic pager
- Call Supervisor or manager on call (Paul Howes – 613- 986-4076)

Your supervisor may consult with you so that they can draft an incident report form, if needed.

### **Speaking on Behalf of the Community House:**

Volunteers who are approached by media or agencies to answer any questions or to advocate as it relates to the work of the Community House should direct any questions to the Community House Coordinator. Community members are welcome to engage with media and agencies as individuals but must make it clear that they are not speaking on behalf of the community house.

### **Taking Messages:**

Community House staff will show you where to record messages. In order to honour confidentiality, you must make sure that you are not leaving a written record of private or confidential material. You will need to take this into consideration when taking phone messages for community house staff. Simple is good.

This example provides enough information: Call (name), URGENT, phone number

This example discloses too much information: Call (name), calling to access food bank, phone number

### **Record Keeping:**

The Morrison Gardens Community House relies on funding to provide programs and services. For this reason, we keep track of the number of people we served so that we can report to our funders. For those of you playing a role to support greeting people in the community house, you will be asked to record how many people were served by the house during your shift by completing a simple form (i.e. how many people used the fax machine). Please note that no names should be recorded on this form. Community House staff will show you where to complete this form.

### **Space Booking:**

To book the Community House and/or portable, please contact Community House staff.

**Once you have read and understand the information in this guide, please sign below and return a copy to your supervisor.**

I have read this guide and I understand that I can approach my supervisor with any questions that arise as a volunteer of the Morrison Gardens Community House. I understand that this guide was created by community members and that it is the responsibility of the Community House staff to ensure that volunteers are acting in a manner that is consistent with our vision. I also understand that a failure to adhere to any parts of the vision may result in dismissal from my volunteer duties.

Name (please print)

Signature

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This guide was created by community members. Much of the material was adapted from the Pinecrest-Queensway Community Health Centre Volunteer Policies and Procedures Manual.

