



VOLUNTEER HANDBOOK

About Mesquite Social Services

Contact Information

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Mesquite Social Services

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MSS Staff

Amanda Langford, Executive Director

Michael Schlegel, Program & Community Development Director

Karina Reyes, Thrift Store Manager

Sarah Dean, Thrift Store Assistant

Our Mission

Mesquite Social Services equips and empowers households experiencing poverty in Mesquite and surrounding communities with exceptional emergency basic needs and self-sufficiency programs.

MSS Programs

Hand UP! Self-Sufficiency Initiative

Mesquite Social Services (MSS) staff and board reconstructed our services with the goal of taking a client in poverty and giving them the skills and knowledge to break the cycle. Out of this idea, the idea of a self-sufficiency initiative called *Hand UP!* was born. MSS staff will be encouraging clients to participate in the *Hand UP! Self-Sufficiency Initiative* to gain the skills to earn gainful employment and knowledge to manage their finances. The initiative consists of three main programs:

GED & Career Readiness Program

The MSS GED program allows clients to access GED prep courses online at no cost. This eight-week courses focus specifically on each client's weaker subjects to maximize their time. MSS also serves as an official GED testing site as of August 2014. Together with key partners, MSS is developing a career readiness aspect to the program that will teach our clients skills required to obtain employment and independence.

MSS Money Matters Program

MSS partners with organizations and community leaders to help our clients learn basic financial skills like budgeting, using a checking account, and using credit in a responsible manner.

MSS Basic Computer

Without critical basic computer skills, our clients can have a very real barrier to becoming gainfully employed. MSS Basic Computer Program teaches clients basic computer skills and MS Office to give them an edge in the job arena. In addition, clients enrolled in the Self-Sufficiency Initiative will be able to use the MSS Computer/Resource Lab when available.

Additional Benefits to Hand UP!

MSS staff and volunteers will work with each client on an individual basis finding out what barriers are keeping them from having a quality life for them and their families. This may include clothing vouchers to the MSS Thrift Store to assist them with appropriate clothing for an interview or work; ride passes to STAR Transit; and access to our basic needs services including a monthly food box as needed to supplement their food, financial assistance with rent and utilities, and the MSS Christmas Cheer program.

Basic Needs Services

MSS Basic Needs Services assists clients with food, financial assistance, and other services during a financial crisis.

Rent/ Mortgage and Utility Bill Assistance

Assistance is based on residency within the parameters of the service area. TXU Energy and several others have partnered up with MSS to assist clients with bills. Federal funds also help MSS provide with rent/mortgage assistance.

Food Pantry

Through donations from the community, MSS is able to offer emergency food assistance. Boxes of food are prepared for clients according to household numbers. Once a month, MSS provides food for the Portable Senior Food Pantry in partnership with Griswold Home Care and City of Mesquite Goodbar Senior Center.

Christmas Cheer

MSS offers Christmas assistance to families experiencing a crisis through the holidays. We provide toys, some clothing, and food to help make sure that all children in our service area receive "Christmas Cheer."

Information & Referral

There are times when a client's needs cannot be met by MSS. In those instances, the client is provided with alternative sources of help within the community.

MSS Thrift Store

MSS Thrift store was created for an additional funding source our programs and operating costs. The thrift store also provides a resource for clients needing appropriate clothes for work/interviews.

POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Volunteers as Clients

MSS volunteers who qualify for services may be served if they are not working that day. They must also go through the same process as clients to receive services. Volunteers are NOT allowed to help service family or friends. If anyone is caught breaking this rule, you will be dismissed from your volunteer commitment.

Scope of Volunteer Involvement

Volunteers may be utilized in all programs and activities of the agency. Volunteers should not, however, be used to displace any paid employees from their positions. Once you are placed in your assigned department you are not allowed to leave until

you have signed out for the day. All Thrift Store (TS) volunteers are required to check in at TS and remain until end of volunteer service. All pantry or Social Services (SS) volunteers are to check in at SS and remain until end of volunteer service.

*Unless otherwise instructed by MSS Staff.

Service at the Discretion of the Agency

The agency accepts the service of all volunteers with the understanding that such service is at the sole discretion of the agency. Volunteers agree that the agency may at any time and for whatever reason decide to terminate the volunteer's relationship with the agency. Volunteers may at anytime choose to sever their relationship with the agency. Notice of such a decision should be communicated as soon as possible to the Volunteer Coordinator.

Conflict of Interest / Conflict Resolution

No person who has a conflict of interest with any activity or program of the agency, whether personal, professional or financial shall be accepted to serve as an agency volunteer.

In the event that a conflict should arise between a volunteer and a client, or another volunteer, the volunteer should immediately contact a staff member and not attempt to dismiss the conflict themselves. The staff alone should confront clients or volunteers regarding behavior or proper procedures.

Representation of the Agency

Prior to any action or statement, which might significantly affect or obligate the agency, volunteers should seek prior approval from appropriate staff (Executive Director). These actions may include, but are not limited to public statements to the press, coalition or lobbying efforts with other organizations or any agreements involving contractual or other financial obligations.

Personal Involvement

Personal involvement with clients is strictly prohibited. All clients must be treated equally and with the same consideration as all other clients. If you know someone coming into the agency for assistance or to shop in TS, please pass the work along to another volunteer.

Personal involvement with other volunteers is prohibited on property. Keep all hands, comments, and gestures to yourself. If you personally know someone, contact must remain professional while on MSS property. Anyone caught violating this procedure will immediately be asked to leave. All personal business must be conducted off premises.

Transportation and Cash Donations

For safety reasons, volunteers will not be permitted to provide transportation to agency clients or customers. Volunteer transportation is at own discretion. **We do not allow any volunteers to provide CASH donations to any client for any reason. If approached by a client, please make ED aware of situation.

Substance Abuse

Possession or consumption of alcohol, illegal drugs, or unauthorized controlled substances, will not be tolerated. These rules apply when the volunteer is on the agencies premises or is engaged in MSS's business, regardless of whether a volunteer is scheduled. **AUTOMATIC DISMISSAL.**

Outside and Smoking Breaks

We are tenets in a City of Mesquite building. We follow all guidelines and laws enforced by the City. There is NO smoking within 50 feet of the building. We would like to keep our entrances and exits clear of donations and people. Please do not sit outside of the building during your breaks.

Cell Phone Use

We ask that all cell phones be placed on silent or vibrate before signing in to begin work. If you have an emergency you may step away from volunteer work to make appropriate phone call. Leisure use of cell phones will not be tolerated. No game playing, no music, no texting; if you have nothing to do, then you probably need to sign out for the day.

Solicitation and Distribution Acknowledgment of Church and State

At no time may a volunteer solicit or be solicited for sale of goods, memberships, support or contributions, for any organization in any area of the agency during working hours. Due to federal funding received by the agency, employees and volunteers must acknowledge the separation of church and state, and must refrain from any form of ministering to agency clients.

Dress Code

Volunteers shall dress for the condition and performance of their duties as deemed appropriate by the supervisor of that program. All dress code applies to men and woman.

- No open toed shoes, no high heels.
- No shorts, unless knee length.
- No tank tops.
- Pants must be worn at waist line.
- **NAME TAGS MUST BE WORN AT ALL TIMES! Staff needs to know you. Please remember to get name tag at sign in.**

Any special activities will be giving prior notice to allow the volunteers to dress appropriately.

Donated Goods

All donated goods must be used for their intended purpose. No volunteer shall remove any donated item from the food pantry, office, or thrift store for personal use. Donated items are to be used by clients only. No donated item can be given to another volunteer. All items are property of MSS and should not be used by volunteers for personal use.

Food Pantry - Items in the food pantry are for clients only. Anyone caught eating or taking items from the pantry will automatically be dismissed from volunteer work and not allowed to return. Another volunteer is not allowed to offer another volunteer food in the pantry. This decision can only be made by a MSS staff member.

Refusal of Services

Mesquite Social Services reserves the right to refuse services to any client. The staff alone can make the decision to deny services. If a staff member has approved service, a volunteer may not then refuse said service.

Prohibited Weapons

MSS policy prohibits all persons (including employees, volunteers, clients, invitees, guests or other visitors) from carrying a prohibited weapon of any kind onto MSS property regardless whether the person is licensed to carry the weapon or not. Prohibited weapons include any form of firearm, explosive device, or other device that is generally considered to be a weapon.

Calculation of Hours

Volunteers will be responsible to accurately record their hours. It is not the Staff's responsibility to remind the volunteers to check in. If inaccuracies occur the volunteer will be dismissed from our services. *We ask that all volunteers whether completing CSR or not, please check in. See supervisor to sign in and out for your hours.

**Please remember to bring in timesheet daily. If you do not have one, see Volunteer Coordinator.

Volunteers are responsible for the upkeep of their timesheet. If it is lost or stolen you must give MSS one week to locate all hours completed and present you with a new timesheet.

Recruitment

Volunteers will be recruited on an ongoing basis. Volunteers will be recruited without regard to gender, religion, disability, or race. The sole qualification for volunteer recruitment will be the ability to perform a task on behalf of the agency. MSS does not accept volunteers under the age of 18 years old, without prior approval from all required staff. All volunteers are subject to background check before being accepted in program.

Attendance

Volunteers are expected to perform their duties on a regular scheduled and timely basis. If a volunteer will miss a scheduled shift, they are to contact their supervisor as soon as possible to inform of the absence. If not needed, MSS may ask volunteers to leave and return on another day. There is no benefit to the community or yourself to have you sit idly in MSS building.

Orientation

Volunteers are required to attend orientation prior to placement. These orientations can take place in group setting or on a one-on-one basic. All existing volunteers must re-attend orientation at the start of a new fiscal year before they can continue to volunteer.

Dismissal of a Volunteer / Reasons for Dismissal

Volunteers who do not follow the rules and procedures of the agency, or who fail to perform their volunteer assignments, are subject to dismissal. No volunteer will be terminated until the volunteer has had an opportunity to discuss the reasons for dismissal. Possible grounds for dismissal may include, but are not limited to, the following: gross misconduct or insubordination, being under the influence of drugs or alcohol, theft of property or misuse of agency equipment or materials, abuse or mistreatment of clients, customers, or co-workers, failure to abide by agency policies and procedures, failure to meet physical or mental standards of performance with reasonable accommodation, failure to perform assigned duties adequately and absenteeism.

Grievance Policy

The ED has full confidence in the staff of MSS. If you have a grievance with a particular staff member; you need to take it up directly with that staff member. In a respectful and responsible manner; most situations can be handled this way. If that does not work, you will need to speak to the Volunteer Coordinator. If that does not work, then you can schedule a meeting with ED to discuss your concerns.

Recognition

The Volunteer Coordinator will recognize volunteers on an on-going basis throughout the year. When possible an annual recognition event should be held to reward and highlight volunteer accomplishments (TWC and CRS volunteers are excluded from recognition awards). More details will become available around two months prior to event.

Most Importantly!

Note from Amanda Langford, Executive Director

Thank you so much for your interest in helping our Community. No matter what brings you to us, we are grateful for the help, support, and new friends made through our volunteer program. We could not help the great number of people without your support. We want your experience with us to be a positive and rewarding one. Hopefully it will be an opportunity for you to gain some new friends, skills, and an organization to support. We have a small, but amazing staff that are here to help with any questions or concerns you may have. Thank you so much for spending your valuable time with Mesquite Social Services!

Sincerely,



Amanda Langford
Executive Director