United Way of New York City Volunteer Policies and Procedures

Know Before You Go

- Volunteers must sign up for volunteer projects through their company’s point person or the designated United Way of New York City (UWNYC) contact for the volunteer project.
- Volunteers cannot bring guests on a project unless a UWNYC or Community-based organization (CBO) staff member has given prior approval and the guests have received a copy of these Volunteer Policies and Procedures and have signed a UWNYC Volunteer Acknowledgment and Release.
- Volunteers need to perform the activities as they are described on the project confirmation form or as instructed by UWNYC staff or CBO staff. If after reading the project confirmation form, a volunteer has questions about the work of the volunteer project, or his or her own ability to participate in the activity, the volunteer should contact UWNYC or CBO staff before committing to the project.
- Volunteers should arrive on time for the volunteer project and stay for the duration of the project, including any time necessary for clean-up.
- Volunteers must promptly leave the site at the conclusion of the volunteer project.
- If volunteers need to cancel their participation in a scheduled volunteer project, they must contact their company point person for the project or UWNYC staff as soon as possible before the project.
- Volunteers will not be compensated.
- UWNYC does not typically require background checks for volunteers; however, UWNYC reserves the right to require such a check, including a criminal background and sexual offender registration check, as a precondition to a volunteer’s ability to participate in a particular volunteer project. In addition, a CBO may have such a requirement.
While You’re There

- Volunteers must never be alone with the individuals receiving services in the volunteer project (“Clients”) or wander away from the group.
- Volunteers must maintain the confidentiality of all confidential, personal or proprietary information to which they are exposed as a volunteer, regardless of the subject matter of such confidential information. This includes, but is not limited to, the names, locations or images of Clients they encounter through their work with UWNYC and the CBO, as well as confidential, personal or proprietary information about UWNYC and the CBO.
- During the volunteer activity volunteers may not take any photographs, including of Clients, unless the volunteer’s employer, UWNYC and the CBO all agree in advance and designate an individual to serve as the employer’s photographer for the volunteer project.
- Volunteers may not use their participation in the volunteer project to promote partisan politics, religious matters, or other affiliations outside of UWNYC.
- UWNYC asks that volunteers serve to the best of their abilities, and in a respectful, professional and cooperative manner while on a volunteer project.
- While on a project, volunteers must not engage in the following:
  - Discriminatory or racist statements or behaviors.
  - Sexual harassment, for example, jokes, innuendos, insults, sexist remarks, the display of derogatory or pornographic pictures, leering, touching or kissing.
  - The use of any alcohol or illegal drugs.
  - Any unlawful or inappropriate activity.
- Volunteers shall not interact with any Client outside of the volunteer project. Volunteers shall not give their contact information (e.g., telephone number or email) to any Clients, nor shall they take contact information from Clients.
- Volunteers shall not transport Clients in the volunteers’ vehicles.
- Apart from the work of the volunteer project, volunteers should not advise Clients regarding legal, medical, educational or other matters, nor should they refer Clients to any individuals who provide professional services. If a volunteer learns that a Client needs some professional service that is not provided by the CBO, the volunteer should inform the CBO so that an appropriate referral can be made. Volunteers should defer to the authority of the CBO. The CBO is primarily responsible for care of Clients
Working with Children and other Vulnerable Populations

Children and minors, the elderly and the incapacitated are particularly vulnerable populations. We expect volunteers to adhere to the following policies when working with these groups.

- Be positive! Sometimes the smallest compliments make a lasting impression.
- Avoid verbal and nonverbal clues about your opinion of a particular Client.
- Model and reinforce positive behavior.
- It is best to avoid physical contact. Encouragement and friendship should be conveyed through words and gestures, not through touching. Physical contact may be appropriate in some limited situations, for example, when safety requires it, when a Client needs help with activities they cannot perform without physical help, or during recreational activities.
- Do not make comments of any kind that relate to the Client’s physical appearance or development.
- Any form of bullying or harassment, verbal or racial abuse is unacceptable.
- Under no circumstances should you be alone with a Client. Do not leave the room with a Client; do not escort a Client to the restroom alone; and stay in sight of UWNYC or CBO staff. Exceptions may be made in cases of emergency if there is no CBO or UWNYC staff available. In those situations, you should try to have another volunteer accompany you.
- If you see an external door open and unattended please tell a UWNYC or CBO staff member.
- Volunteers should defer to the authority of the CBO. The CBO is primarily responsible for care of Clients.

Response to Crises or Problems

- Any volunteer affiliated with UWNYC who is concerned about child protection issues (e.g., neglect, physical or sexual abuse, molestation, suicidal tendencies, etc.) should speak, in the first instance, to a supervising CBO staff member. Any volunteer who is spoken to by a child concerning child protection issues should listen carefully to what the child has to say, and if possible make a note of the conversation. The volunteer should not promise confidentiality.
- Any allegation, accusation or suspicion of neglect, abuse or suicidal tendencies with respect to any Client should be reported immediately to a CBO staff member. Volunteers should not undertake an investigation themselves, beyond finding out enough information to pass to a CBO staff member.
Volunteer Dismissal

UWNYC will reassign or dismiss volunteers when such action is in the best interest of UWNYC, the volunteer, the project, the Client and/or the CBO. Possible reasons for dismissal may include:
- Refusal to attend orientation or other required training.
- Excessive lateness.
- Disclosure of confidential information.
- The use of alcohol or other inappropriate substances while on a project.
- Involvement in any illegal activities.
- Failure to adhere to any UWNYC or CBO policies, guidelines or procedures.
- Any inappropriate behavior.

Volunteer Feedback

If a volunteer has any constructive feedback, concerns about a volunteer project, questions about appropriate behavior of another volunteer on a project, or complaints regarding inappropriate behavior by another volunteer, a Client, or the CBO they should first speak with a UWNYC staff member. If the volunteer is unable to speak with UWNYC staff during the project, or has a complaint concerning UWNYC staff, he/she should contact Natalia Jasienowicz, UWNYC Senior Manager of Volunteerism at 212-251-2421 or njasienowicz@uwnyc.org.