



Friends of the Bridge

Volunteer Handbook

Updated April 2008



Dear Volunteer,

You have joined an organization that has established an outstanding reputation for community service. Much of the credit goes to the many volunteers who share their time and talent with MDHA by volunteering. It is our hope that your volunteer experience will be a rewarding and enjoyable opportunity. The Bridge is the only center of its kind to offer emergency services and transitional housing at the same facility. We are proud of this fact and are excited about the decision you have made help us make this a reality as a volunteer.

The Volunteer Handbook provides answers to many of the questions you may have about volunteering with The Bridge. It covers policies and procedures, and our mutual responsibilities. You are responsible for reading and understanding the Volunteer Handbook, and for adhering to its policies and procedures. If anything is unclear, please give me a call.

The information included in the Volunteer Handbook may change. Every effort will be made to keep you informed of any changes.

The personal satisfaction gained from a job well done is one reason many people enjoy volunteering. Career development, community service, and enjoying the company of others are additional benefits your involvement may bring you. The senior management team with the Bridge is dedicated to doing its part to assure you of a satisfying volunteer experience.

MDHA is committed to a comprehensive approach to address the issue of homelessness and our community, and we are so pleased that you have decided to join us! We extend to you our personal best wishes for your success and happiness as a volunteer.

Sincerely,

Alonzo Peterson M.S.  
Community Affairs Director, The Bridge  
Metro Dallas Homeless Alliance (MDHA)

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## **Purpose of this Handbook**

The Handbook has been prepared to inform you about MDHA's history, philosophy, practices, and policies. Although no handbook can answer every question, we have attempted to cover the major points of volunteering with the organization. If you have any questions about your volunteer experience, you are encouraged to discuss them with the community affairs director. Through our person-to-person contact we can get to know each other, express our views, and work together successfully.

The Bridge depends on its volunteers: your success is our success. We believe you will enjoy your volunteer work, staff, and your fellow volunteers. We also believe you will find The Bridge a good place to volunteer.

We ask that you read the Handbook carefully, and refer to it whenever questions arise. We also suggest that you take it home so your family can become familiar with MDHA and our policies.

## **About Metro Dallas Homeless Alliance**

The Metro Dallas Homeless Alliance was created in 2002 to address the burgeoning homeless population in Dallas County. Two groups joined forces to help work to end homelessness in our community. Dallas Association to Serve the Homeless (DASH) and the City of Dallas Homeless Consortium combined their efforts. A series of workshops and community meetings were held to determine what the community saw as needs, gaps and priorities for maximizing services to homeless people. A structure for the organization was developed, by-laws were written, and recruitment of a board of directors began. There has been a conscious effort to include the representation from Dallas and the surrounding communities in addressing this critical social need.

Since the creation of MDHA, the level of responsibility within the community has continued to increase. The projects of MDHA provide a direct impact to the efforts of eliminating homelessness. MDHA staff coordinate the Continuum of Care activities for the communities in Dallas and Collin Counties, and works in partnership with the City of Dallas in implementing the 10-Year Plan to Eliminate Chronic Homelessness. In 2006, the Dallas City Council passed a resolution recognizing MDHA as the "regional authority on homelessness."

## **Relationship between MDHA and The Bridge**

The Bridge is one of many initiatives MDHA is committed to the end long-term chronic homelessness.

## **Mission Statement**

The mission of MDHA is to end homelessness in the Dallas area through strengthening services, advocacy and community collaboration.

## **Volunteer Mission Statement**

Working as a team, volunteers, community service workers, and staff will enhance the effectiveness and responsiveness of services at The Bridge and provide citizens the opportunity to take ownership of their community.

## **Definition**

A volunteer is any person who is an unpaid staff person who does work that contributes to our mission.

## **Name of Volunteer Program**

The name of the volunteer program is Friends of the Bridge.

## **Four Types of Volunteer Opportunities**

**Administrative Volunteer:** These volunteers will do important work ranging from clerical to high level projects.

**Direct Service Volunteer:** These volunteers will be more closely working with the homeless through one of our partners.

**Specialty Volunteers:** These volunteers will help provide special needed services. (Examples include: teaching a computer class, providing hair cuts in the barbershop/salon).

**Community Ambassadors:** These volunteers will be trained to go out and speak on behalf of the Bridge.

## **MDHA Basics**

- Volunteers are not eligible to enter into leases/contracts.
- Mailing lists may not be sold, reproduced or distributed to a third party.
- **MDHA may not endorse political candidates** or include political advertisements in the local or state newsletter or in any other materials bearing the name of MDHA.
- **MDHA may not endorse products or services.**
- Settle internal differences in private rather than in the public's eye.

## **What You Can Expect From MDHA**

As a volunteer with MDHA you can expect:

- To receive a clear, specific job description.
- To be given appropriate assignments according to your skill, interests, availability, and training.
- To be trusted with confidential information if needed to carry out assignments.
- To be given appropriate expressions of appreciation and recognition.
- To receive orientation, training, and supervision for the jobs you accept and know why you are being asked to do a particular task.
- To have your time used well due to the planning, coordination and cooperation of staff .
- To discuss any problem with staff, and receive prompt attention to any concerns which may arise.
- Personnel records will be kept documenting your volunteer experience including positions held, training, evaluations, and commendations.
- That your individual rights will be respected, and that all volunteers will be treated with courtesy and consideration.
- To have appropriate work space, including consideration for physical disabilities.

## **What MDHA Expects from You**

- Your first responsibility is to know your duties and how to do them promptly, correctly, and pleasantly.
- You are expected to cooperate with staff and your fellow volunteers and maintain a good team attitude.
- You are expected to grasp opportunities for personal development that are offered to you.
- We expect you to voice your opinions and contribute your suggestions to improve the quality of the program
- You will attend all training sessions scheduled for your assignment.
- You will sign in and out each time you volunteer at The Bridge
- You need to inform your supervisor as soon as possible of any planned absence or lateness.
- You are expected to keep all communications with or concerning clients confidential.
- You will report for all volunteer service on time.
- You will provide feedback to the agency to help us continually improve.

# **Volunteering Policies and Procedures**

As a new or returning volunteer with The Bridge you will encounter new situations and will need to become familiar with new surroundings. Your fellow volunteers and staff want to help you get off to a good start. Feel free to ask them for help concerning anything you do not understand.

One of the first things you should do is carefully read this Handbook. It is designed to answer many of your questions about the practices and policies of The Bridge.

## **Absences and Lateness**

The positions volunteers fill are critical to this organization. Volunteers are expected to be reliable in the performance of their volunteer duties. Volunteer attendance is expected to be dependable and punctual.

If you are unable to report or to volunteer, or if you will arrive late, please contact your supervisor immediately. Give him/her as much time as possible to arrange for someone else to cover your position until you arrive. Excessive absences may be cause for dismissal from volunteer activities. If a volunteer plans to be absent consecutively for a week or more, please notify staff so a replacement can be found while you are gone.

## **Anniversary Date**

The first day that you fill out the volunteer application is your “official” anniversary date. This anniversary date will be used to base the hours of service.

## **Assigned Areas**

Volunteers may be assigned to work in one or more of the following areas: educational and recreational activities, engagement, facility management, barbershop/salon, job seeker services, kennel, laundry, library, mail, meals, rapport, storage and the women’s area. Additional assigned areas may be added to this list as demand dictates.

## **Attendance**

Time sheets are required of all volunteers. Volunteers are required to sign in and out each time they volunteer.

The time sheets are needed in order to maintain an accurate record of your contribution to the department in which you work. The statistics of your volunteer service are used to apply for grants and funding as well as for volunteer recognition. In addition, many companies are accepting volunteer work as qualifying experience for employment. Future employers will need to know detailed information on the volunteer job held including start and end dates, number of hours volunteered, and duties.

## **Background Check**

Any volunteer who comes into one-on-one contact with youth will undergo a criminal background check. The results of the criminal background check are confidential and will only be known by authorized personnel.

A record of disqualifying offense could eliminate volunteers from consideration as a member of the Friends of the Bridge volunteer program. You will have an opportunity to review your criminal background check, and if you dispute the record as received, a procedure is available for clarification.

## **Benefits**

Benefits to volunteers include the following:

- Development of marketable skills for future career opportunities
- Training and other learning opportunities.
- Documentation of training and work experience.

## **Commitment**

We ask our volunteers to commit to one year of volunteering with The Bridge. Of course, if you or your spouse is transferred or you move out of the area we will not hold you to this promise.

We ask that our volunteers make a minimum commitment of at least one regularly scheduled shift or four hours per month. Some assignments may require a longer hourly commitment.

## **Confidential Information**

Volunteers are responsible for maintaining the confidentiality of all proprietary or privileged information to which they are exposed while serving as a volunteer. This applies to any information involving a victim, employee, volunteer, or business.

Your volunteer service with The Bridge assumes an obligation to maintain confidentiality. As a volunteer, you may be privy to information that is confidential in nature. Such information cannot be shared with your family, friends, or acquaintances.

Because of its seriousness, disclosure of confidential information will lead to dismissal.

## **Customer Relations**

The success of the department to which you are assigned depends upon the quality of the relationships between the volunteers, staff and clients, and the community. Regardless of your position, you are an ambassador.

Here are several things you can do to help give the public a good impression of MDHA/The Bridge:

- Act competently and deal with clients and co-workers courteously and respectfully.
- Communicate pleasantly and respectfully with other volunteers and staff at all times.

- Follow up on requests promptly, provide business like replies to inquiries, and perform all duties in an orderly manner.
- Take pride in your volunteer service and enjoy doing your best.

These are the building blocks for your success and the continued success as a member of Friends of the Bridge.

## **Dress Code**

Take your lead from the staff and dress appropriately for the job you are doing. It is best to neither overdress nor under dress. Casual clothing is fine, but we ask that your attire be neat and conservative. If working in any area other than in the office, please wear closed toe shoes

Personal appearance should be a matter of concern for each volunteer. If your supervisor feels your attire is out of place, you may be asked to leave your volunteer place until you are properly attired.

## **Exit Interviews**

In instances where a volunteer voluntarily leaves, the volunteer department would like to discuss your reasons for leaving and any other impressions that you may have about the organization. If you decide to leave, you will be asked to grant us the privilege of an exit interview. During the exit interview, you can express yourself freely. It is hoped that this exit interview will help us part friends, as well as provide insights into possible improvements. All information will be kept strictly confidential and will in no way affect any references that MDHA will provide another agency about you.

## **Expense Reimbursement**

You must have the community affairs director's written authorization prior to incurring an expense on behalf of MDHA or The Bridge. To be reimbursed for all authorized expenses, you must submit an expense report accompanied by receipts and approved by director of community services.

## **Feedback**

An efficient, successful operation and satisfied volunteers go hand in hand. Volunteer grievances are of concern to The Bridge. In order to provide for prompt and efficient evaluation and response to grievances, A Feedback Procedure has been established for all volunteers. It will always be the organization's policy to give full consideration to every volunteer's opinion. There will be no discrimination against or toward anyone for his or her part in presenting grievances.

Under this policy, a grievance is defined as any event, condition, rule, or practice which the volunteer believes violates his/her civil rights, treats him/her unfairly, or causes him/her any degree of unpleasantness or unhappiness on the job. A grievance may also deal with an attitude, a statement, or an opinion held by a manager or volunteer.

## **Gifts, Tips, & Soliciting**

Do not accept any tips or gifts from clients, their families or friends. We do not want to create an atmosphere where our clients feel obligated to reward MDHA or Bridge staff and volunteers for doing their job.

You may not promote or solicit your business enterprise, political agenda, or religious beliefs while volunteering with us in order to respect the diversity of opinions that will exist.

## **Harassment**

MDHA intends to provide a volunteer environment that is pleasant, healthful, comfortable, and free from intimidation, hostility or other offenses which might interfere with volunteer performance. Harassment may include words, signs, jokes, pranks, intimidation, physical contact, or violence. Harassment of any sort—verbal, physical, visual—will not be tolerated.

Sexual harassment may include unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, requiring sexual favors as a condition of employment, and other verbal or physical contact of a sexual nature which creates an intimidating environment or prevents an individual from effectively performing the duties of their position.

As a volunteer, you are responsible for keeping our volunteer environment free of harassment. Any volunteer, who becomes aware of an incident of harassment, whether by witnessing the incident or being told of it, must report it to any staff person whom you feel comfortable. When staff become aware that harassment might exist, it is obligated by law to take prompt and appropriate action.

## **Job Descriptions**

Job descriptions have been developed that provide a framework for the work that a volunteer will be expected to do. Copies of these descriptions begin on page 12. For more information on these descriptions, please contact community affairs director.

## **Smoking**

All MDHA/Bridge offices are non-smoking facilities. If you smoke, there are outside places appropriate for you to enjoy a short break. Please be courteous and concerned about the needs of your fellow volunteers and others.

## **Substance Abuse**

Friends of the Bridge has no desire to intrude into its volunteers' personal lives. However, both on-the-job and off-the-job involvement with any mood altering substances can have an impact on our agency and on the organization's ability to achieve its objectives of safety and security.

Therefore, you are expected to report to the agency with no mood altering substances in your body.

The possession, sale or use of mood altering substances while volunteering shall be a violation of safe volunteer practices and will be subject to disciplinary action, including dismissal.

Volunteers, who show signs or evidence of having consumed alcohol, and/or drugs, will not be permitted entrance to the campus. Violators will be dismissed from Friends of the Bridge

## **Termination**

MDHA is an at-will agency and has the right to end volunteer services provided by an individual without cause, but will always consider the cause leading to the termination. In general, failure to adhere to policies and procedures is cause for immediate release.

MDHA has the right to ask a volunteer to leave the facility immediately.

Grounds for immediate dismissal may include, but are not limited to:

- Gross misconduct or insubordination.
- Reporting for a volunteer assignment under the influence of alcohol or drugs.
- Theft of property or misuse of agency funds, equipment or materials.
- Illegal, violent or unsafe acts.
- Abuse or mistreatment of clients or volunteers.
- Releasing confidential information.
- Unwillingness to support and further the mission of the organization.



## POSITION DESCRIPTION

POSITION: Administrative Volunteer

OFFICE: The Bridge

REPORTS TO: Community Affairs Director or assigned coordinator

### GENERAL DESCRIPTION:

Volunteer is responsible for assisting MDHA staff with administrative tasks to support MDHA and the Bridge.

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### ESSENTIAL POSITION FUNCTIONS:

1. Assist various MDHA staff with projects of a clerical nature.
2. Assist MDHA with special projects as needed.
3. Perform other duties as assigned.

### POSITION REQUIREMENTS

1. A passion for working with the homeless.
2. A willingness to be trained on MDHA programs.
3. Ethical behavior and confidentiality are a must in this position.
4. Excellent interpersonal and communication skills are important.
5. Desktop PC skills are a must.

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## POSITION DESCRIPTION

POSITION: Direct Services Volunteer

OFFICE: The Bridge

REPORTS TO: Community Affairs Director or assigned coordinator

### GENERAL DESCRIPTION:

Volunteer is responsible for assisting staff of The Bridge with tasks that provide service to the clients and residents. Some of the areas of help include the library, laundry, kennel, reception desk and the kitchen.

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### ESSENTIAL POSITION FUNCTIONS:

4. Help with the serving of meals; 3 are offered each day.
5. Work with the guest services department to meet the needs of clients and residents.
6. Perform other duties as assigned.

### POSITION REQUIREMENTS

6. A passion for working with the homeless.
7. A willingness to be trained on MDHA programs.
8. Ethical behavior and confidentiality are a must in this position.
9. Excellent interpersonal and communication skills are important.
10. Desktop PC skills are a must.

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## POSITION DESCRIPTION

POSITION: Specialty Program Volunteer

OFFICE: The Bridge

REPORTS TO: Community Affairs Director or assigned coordinator

### GENERAL DESCRIPTION:

Volunteer is responsible for providing a unique program or service to the clients and residents of the Bridge that would not be provided otherwise because of its cost.

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### ESSENTIAL POSITION FUNCTIONS:

7. Work with the Community Affairs Director to determine a fit between client needs and professional talents.
8. Provide specialized services to the clients and residents of The Bridge.
9. Perform other duties as assigned.

### POSITION REQUIREMENTS

11. A passion for working with the homeless.
12. A willingness to be trained on MDHA programs.
13. Ethical behavior and confidentiality are a must in this position.
14. Excellent interpersonal and communication skills are important.
15. Desktop PC skills are a must.



## POSITION DESCRIPTION

POSITION: Community Ambassador

OFFICE: The Bridge

REPORTS TO: Community Affairs Director

### GENERAL DESCRIPTION:

Volunteer is responsible speaking on the behalf of MDHA to the community to help raise awareness and community support

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### ESSENTIAL POSITION FUNCTIONS:

10. Accept speaking engagements to talk on behalf of MDHA
11. Assist Director of Community Development with tasks related to fundraising for MDHA.
12. Speak to the community on behalf of MDHA and communicate our needs.
13. Perform other duties as assigned.

### POSITION REQUIREMENTS

16. A passion for working with the homeless.
17. A willingness to be trained on MDHA programs.
18. Ethical behavior and confidentiality are a must in this position.
19. Excellent interpersonal and communication skills are important.
20. Desktop PC skills are a must.

## **Receipt and Acknowledgement of Friends of the Bridge Volunteer Handbook**

The Volunteer Handbook is an important document intended to help you become acquainted with Metro Dallas Homeless Alliance (MDHA) and The Bridge. This handbook will serve as a guide to your volunteer service; it is not the final word in all cases. Individual circumstances may call for individual attention.

Please read the following statements and sign below to indicate your receipt and acknowledgment of the Friends of the Bridge Volunteer Handbook.

- I have received and read a copy of the Friends of the Bridge Volunteer Handbook. I understand that the policies, rules, and benefits described in it are subject to change at the sole discretion of MDHA at anytime.
- I further understand that my volunteer service is terminable at will, either by me or The Bridge staff regardless of the length of my volunteer service.
- I am aware that during the course of my volunteering confidential information may be made available to me. I understand that confidential information must not be released within or outside MDHA's premises or property.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Volunteer Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Community Affairs Director

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date