



Covenant House Missouri

Volunteer Handbook

Revised May 2023

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COVENANT HOUSE OVERVIEW

Covenant House International

Covenant House is the largest privately-funded, non-profit child care agency in the United States providing food, shelter, emergency, and support services to at-risk youth. It was incorporated in New York City in 1972, and has since expanded to 31 cities across six countries.

For more than four decades, Covenant House has helped transform and save the lives of more than a million homeless, runaway and trafficked young people. Throughout the entire federation, Covenant Houses offer housing and support services to young people in need - currently reaching 50,000 youth every year.

Covenant House Missouri

Covenant House Missouri (CHMO) began a small street outreach program in St. Louis in 1998 for unhoused youth. For more than 20 years, CHMO has openly accepted young people experiencing homelessness and has provided personalized solutions to guide them from homelessness to hope. Still today, though, as many as 600 unaccompanied youth are homeless in St. Louis every night. As the only nonprofit organization dedicated to serving homeless, runaway, and at-risk youth in the city-limits of St. Louis, Covenant House continues to be a place of unconditional love, hope, and support for our community's most vulnerable youth.

Covenant House Missouri offers a combination of support strategies, including outreach, residential services, educational programs, job training and placement, medical services, and mental health counseling. We take a holistic approach when we partner with young people to ensure each meets their goals for the future. We also offer basic necessities, employment services, and support to more than 200 youth in the surrounding St. Louis City community to assist their long-term success and well-being. Ultimately, our goal is that every youth exits our programs to stable housing and moves towards an independent, sustainable future.



Covenant House Missouri

MISSION STATEMENT

Covenant House Missouri welcomes youth who are runaway, trafficked, at-risk, or experiencing homelessness with unconditional love, absolute respect and a place to call home.

Beyond shelter and basic needs, we deliver transformative solutions to help young people ages 16 to 24 build productive, independent and sustainable lives.

ACCEPTANCE & INCLUSIVITY STATEMENT

Covenant House Missouri (CHMO) is open to all. Our commitment to accepting everyone is integral to who we are and drives our work every day. For our youth, staff, partners, and supporters, we are passionate about ensuring CHMO is an inclusive environment that promotes and values diversity. We support each individual in the context of their reality, background, experience, skills, and perspectives which make them unique. We strive to show everyone unconditional love and absolute respect.

More specifically, Covenant House Missouri includes all, regardless of race, color, national origin, ethnic origin, ancestry, religion, disability, sex, gender, gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, military status, veteran status, genetic information, political ideation, political affiliation, or any other characteristic.



THE COVENANT HOUSE GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Immediacy: We immediately meet the basic needs of youth experiencing homelessness: a nourishing meal, a shower, clean clothes, medical attention, and a safe place to sleep.

Sanctuary: We provide a safe haven from homelessness, recognize the worth of every human being, and create a safe setting where all youth are served without judgement.

Value Communication: We believe relationships are based on love, trust, respect, and honesty.

Structure: We provide the stability and structure necessary to build a positive future.

Choice: We foster confidence; encouraging young people to believe in themselves and make informed choices for their lives.

VOLUNTEER ROLES, DUTIES, & REQUIREMENTS

Each year, volunteers donate hundreds of hours of service to Covenant House Missouri. The support of these individuals and groups enable us to continue to provide comprehensive services for young people we serve. By assisting our staff, supporting facilities projects, and offering assistance to young people, volunteers play an important role in Covenant House Missouri's success.

Persons are recruited based on CHMO's needs via [online application](#). In any act of volunteer service, there **must be mutual benefits for all** parties involved. Therefore, in placing volunteers we seek to meet the needs of CHMO's facility and programs, the youth, and the volunteers.

All volunteers must be **18 or older** to volunteer at Covenant House Missouri. Before being officially accepted as a volunteer, all individuals are **required** to provide proof of COVID-19 vaccinations. All volunteers will also need to complete the volunteer application, a background check and sign a liability waiver, and a confidentiality agreement. Volunteers who volunteer on an ongoing basis or work directly with youth will be subject to an additional background check and volunteer training.

There are two general types of volunteer work at Covenant House Missouri - **Episodic Supporters and Ongoing Volunteers**. **Episodic Supporters** participate in one-time or intermittent staff-supervised volunteer opportunities, like facilities projects, sorting/organizing donations for the Cov-Closet, career panels, holiday gift-wrapping, etc. **Ongoing Volunteers** donate their time to CHMO on a regular, continuous basis, may work 1:1 with the

youth, or may lead a class/activity with the young people. The acceptance and placement of volunteers is based on their willingness to accept CHMO's mission and principles, their talents, abilities, time availability, and the needs at the time of their application. Each volunteer is assigned to a department supervisor with whom schedules and schedule changes are to be determined and approved based on need.

Volunteers may be utilized in all programs and activities of Covenant House Missouri and serve at all levels of skill. Volunteers will not, however, be utilized to displace any paid employee from his or her position, to make or interpret policy decisions, or to alter or amend any youth's individual service plan.

VOLUNTEER POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

All volunteers are the responsibility of the Advancement Department. If at any time you wish to change your area of volunteer service, please notify the Advancement Specialist, Volunteers and In-kind Donations.

Equal Opportunity: It is the policy of Covenant House Missouri to provide equal opportunities to all qualified volunteers and prospective volunteers. We welcome every race, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, or expression.

Application Renewal: Once a volunteer application is accepted, it is valid for one year. After one year, each volunteer must fill out a new volunteer application to make sure all information is up to date, resubmit forms, make sure background check are not expired (if required), and renew volunteer trainings (if required).

Training: Ongoing volunteers will be required to attend a yearly Volunteer Training offered by Covenant House Missouri. Additional training specific to the volunteer's position will be provided by his/her direct supervisor and/or staff within the department to which they are assigned on an as needed basis.

Personnel Records: Volunteers must notify the Advancement Specialist, Volunteers and In-kind Donations of any changes to their address, telephone numbers, or availability. All personal records will be kept confidential.

What to Wear: You will be serving as a role model for our youth, so it is important to dress appropriately. If you are

volunteering with the Career Center, business casual is preferred. When completing things like facilities, casual attire is in order. Please use your best judgement.

Recording Volunteer Hours: We maintain a record of volunteer service hours for our quarterly reports, and it enables us to keep an accurate record of the considerable contribution made by our volunteers. Please check in at the front desk and with the Advancement Specialist, Volunteers and In-kind Donations anytime you complete volunteer hours.

Accidents in the Workplace: Any injury or accident which occurs while a volunteer is either on assignment or on the premises must be immediately be reported to his/her supervisor and the Advancement Specialist, Volunteers and In-kind Donations.

Personal Property: Covenant House Missouri is not responsible for loss or damage of personal property. Valuable items or items with sentimental value should be left at home. Please ensure that your personal belongings are left in a safe and secure place while on site as advised by your supervisor.

Smoking: At CHMO, smoking is prohibited in all indoor facilities. Please take all smoking outside in the designated smoking areas and dispose of any refuse appropriately. Thank you for your cooperation.

Drug-Free Workplace: Covenant House Missouri is a drug-free workplace. All volunteers are hereby on notice that it is unlawful to manufacture, distribute, possess, or use an unlawful controlled substance at CHMO.

Firearms and Weapons Policy: All volunteers are strictly prohibited from carrying or storing in their vehicle any firearm, weapons, and/or ammunition on Covenant House Missouri property, regardless of the existence of a valid concealed carry permit.

Harassment: The purpose of this policy is to ensure that, in the workplace, no one unlawfully harasses another individual; it is not to regulate our personal morality or conduct. It is the policy of the agency to prohibit harassment of or by an employee, supervisor, volunteer, or any person doing business with the agency, and to commit to maintain a work environment that is free from unlawful harassment. Anyone who feels that s/he has been subjected to sexual or any other form of

harassment should immediately report the matter to her/his supervisor and Advancement Specialist, Volunteers and In-kind Donations. Every report will be investigated and corrective action is taken where appropriate.

Evaluation: Each volunteer will have an opportunity to complete an electronic feedback form to help evaluate the volunteer experience. A volunteer may at any time request a meeting with the Advancement Specialist, Volunteers and In-kind Donations to address any questions or concerns that may arise.

Child Abuse: Volunteers will *immediately* report any suspected child abuse to the Advancement Specialist, Volunteers and In-kind Donations. Appropriate action will be taken.

Donations and Gifts: Any gifts for the use of Covenant Missouri House youth (e.g., clothing, food, toiletries, etc.) are not to be used by volunteers for personal use. Cash donations should only be accepted by staff in the development or executive offices. To ensure that individuals representing Covenant House Missouri are not placed in positions where their judgment may be influenced, money, gifts from vendors, suppliers, contractors, or other persons doing business with Covenant House Missouri should not be accepted by volunteers.

Representation of Covenant House Missouri: Volunteers who wish to represent Covenant House Missouri and its programs by speaking with others on a formal basis must obtain clearance through the Marketing and Communications Department. Anyone seeking to publish articles on Covenant House Missouri should obtain prior consent from the CEO and the Advancement Department. No staff member or volunteer is permitted to make any statement to the media without clearance.

Confidentiality: Information regarding the admission, shelter, or services of any Covenant House Missouri youth is confidential and protected under federal laws and regulations. The youth's very presence in the program is confidential information.

In addition, any phone conversations, records, any information you may hear, or personal situations revealed to you may not be discussed outside of the work situation. Releasing information and/or identifying a person as a young person, verbally or in writing, other than through prescribed procedures is a serious matter and is cause for disciplinary action.

Volunteers may not discuss an individual young person, give files or medical record information (or any portion thereof), or

give any shelter or outreach center information whatsoever to any unauthorized person, including Covenant House Missouri staff who do not normally have access to such information.

Every person volunteering at Covenant House Missouri must comply with the confidentiality policies and procedures, and will be required to sign a confidentiality agreement.

Covenant House Photo Policy: Volunteers are encouraged to share their experience on social media by posting, checking in, and tagging Covenant House Missouri. Please remember that this is a place that youth call home and many have experienced levels of trauma that may be hard for us to understand. We ask that volunteers respect the privacy of youth and staff by asking for their **permission** before taking or posting any photos on social media and **inform** them of any intent to post their pictures on social media.

Dismissal of a Volunteer: Volunteers who do not adhere to the rules/procedures of Covenant House Missouri, who consistently fail to show up or satisfactorily perform their volunteer assignments, perform an egregious act, or put CHMO youth in danger are subject to dismissal. No volunteer will be terminated until he/she has had an opportunity to discuss their reasons for dismissal with the Advancement Specialist, Volunteers and In-kind Donations, and any relevant supervisory staff. Except in extreme cases, volunteers will be given a period of time to rectify any problems before dismissal.



PROFESSIONAL COURTESIES

Use of Telephone:

Volunteers are requested to keep personal calls to a minimum. These calls should not interfere with the normal workflow or the services provided to the youth.

Punctuality:

If you are not arriving at your previously scheduled time, please notify the Advancement Specialist, Volunteers and In-kind Donations, and/or your supervisor as far in advance as possible so that they may be able to make alternate scheduling arrangements. CHMO relies upon your dependability. Also, you are serving as a positive role model for our youth, so please try to be on time.

Absences:

Volunteers should notify the Advancement Specialist, Volunteers and In-kind Donations, and/or their staff supervisor at least 24 hours in advance of any need to cancel their allotted volunteer shift. This enables us to find a replacement or reschedule if possible.

Saying Good-Bye:

If a long-term volunteer must leave their position with Covenant House Missouri, both their staff supervisor and the Advancement Specialist, Volunteers and In-kind Donations should be notified as soon as possible. A confidential exit interview will be arranged with the Advancement Specialist, Volunteers and In-kind Donations in order to evaluate their experience.



YOUTH RELATIONSHIP GUIDELINES FOR VOLUNTEERS

The following guidelines, although good to know for everyone, are more for volunteers who work directly one-on-one with our youth. These guidelines will help direct care volunteers communicate and relate effectively with our youth in accordance with the Covenant House Missouri principles and agency policies.

- Build solid relationships with our youth by being a good listener. An attentive ear can work miracles.
- Respect the dignity of the young people and help them to feel important and cared about. Helping them to build their self-esteem is one of the most important things you can do to help the youth we serve.
- Accept youth as they are. As a volunteer, it is not your responsibility to change the habits, attitudes or lifestyle of a young person. Be accepting and non-judgmental and help youth to focus on the positive aspects of their lives.
- Respect the privacy and personal property of the young people.
- Look beyond any hostile or negative behavior, which may be exhibited by a youth. Do not take it personally. Instead, recognize that feelings of anger or depression are a logical consequence of the past experiences of many of the CHMO youth. Such feelings may be lessened by patience and understanding on the part of a caring adult.

The volunteer relationship with the young people must occur solely within the confines of Covenant House Missouri. Sanctuary and confidentiality are essential in order to build a relationship of trust with the youth we serve. They are also necessary to protect the safety of both the youth and volunteers. As such, volunteers are asked as part of their commitment, to adhere to the following procedures:

- Do not identify youth or discuss personal information about youth outside the agency or with other young people.
- Do not agree to meet youth outside of Covenant House Missouri's buildings.

- Do not engage in physical contact with young people.
- Do not disclose your home or business address or telephone numbers to youth.
- Do not purchase items for, give, or lend money to young people.
- Do not transport youth in your own vehicle without the approval of the CEO.



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GRIEVANCE PROCEDURES FOR VOLUNTEERS

Covenant House Missouri (CHMO) is committed to providing volunteers with the best possible experience. This grievance policy is in place for any volunteer to express concerns of perceived inequities, unfair treatment, or dissatisfaction with agency actions or behaviors.

I. Purpose

This goal of this policy is to provide a fair and impartial grievance process to ensure that volunteer concerns are heard and addressed.

II. Definition

What Constitutes a Grievance: A grievance is a complaint based upon an actual or perceived situation in which the person believes there is just cause for protest or disagreement.

III. Policies and Procedures

- 1) Try to resolve the problem/ grievance directly with the person(s) involved.
- 2) If a positive resolution cannot be reached, discuss the issue with the Advancement Specialist, Volunteers and In-kind Donations. He/she will take the necessary actions to resolve the issues with the person(s) concerned.
- 3) If the conflict has still not been resolved satisfactorily, the volunteer must submit grievance in writing to the Advancement Specialist, Volunteers and In-kind Donations, AND the Director of Advancement within 10 days of the original incident. The statement should include a detailed summary of the problem/ incident and the measures already taken to resolve the issue. An investigation of the problem/ incident will then commence and new solutions will be implemented.
- 4) If the volunteer is still unsatisfied with the actions taken, the case will be sent to the Chief Administrative Officer for further investigation and action. The volunteer may be subject to an interview by the Chief Administrative Officer at this stage to make sure the incident is being taken care of in a fair, equitable manner for all parties involved.

Legal Rights of Children and Their Families

Missouri Emancipation

Parents and legal guardians are responsible for their children legally and financially until they turn 18 or become emancipated. This responsibility consists of supplying food, shelter, education, and healthcare to the child. When a child is emancipated, they are accountable for all of those needs for themselves. Therefore, the parents or legal guardians are no longer liable for the acts on an emancipated minor. In addition, parents or guardians are no longer required to support them financially.

Under Missouri law, emancipation allows an emancipated minor to have the full legal rights of an adult. For example, an emancipated minor can establish their own residence, consent to medical treatment, enter into a binding contract, register a vehicle in their own name, and be entitled to their own earnings.

While emancipation in Missouri allows a minor to consent to medical treatment without parental consent, some medical issues can be seen by a medical professional without the consent of the minor's parents. With no petition for emancipation, minors in Missouri may still consent to medical treatment without adult permission for medical concerns associated with pregnancy, sexually transferred infections, or drug abuse. Additionally, a married minor who is not emancipated might be included in the joint ownership of property. Missouri emancipation laws are subject to change.

McKinney Vento Act

Education provides an opportunity for homeless students to lift themselves; without it, students are disadvantaged and deprioritized. Under the McKinney-Vento Act, school districts are required to offer homeless children the opportunity to enroll in public schools, the transportation they need to get there, and the resources they need to succeed. The McKinney-Vento Act ensures that students experiencing homelessness have an opportunity to attend school and have the tools to succeed. Segregation based on a student's status as homeless is strictly prohibited.

Under the McKinney Vento Act, children in homeless situations have:

- The right to immediate enrollment in school, even if they lack the paperwork usually required for registration.
- The right to attend school at their school of origin if feasible and requested by the parent or the school in the attendance area where the family or youth is currently residing.
- The right to receive transportation to the school of origin if requested by the parents.
- The right to services comparable to those obtained by housed schoolmates, including transportation and supplemental educational services.
- The right to attend school along with children not experiencing homelessness.

Missouri Youth Corrections Model

The Missouri youth corrections model reinvented the practice of rehabilitating youth offenders. Achieving better results with young people and families in the juvenile justice system requires a fundamentally different approach. Unfortunately, traditional correctional programs often cause further harm. They have typically been ineffective in achieving anything more than temporary behavioral compliance that does not translate well to success in the community. If we do not deal with the root causes of delinquency, young people returning to communities lack the preparation necessary to make good choices and become productive citizens. Unfortunately, many youth correctional programs are based on assumptions, counter to research and experience related to adolescents' cognitive, behavioral, and emotional development. We must view young people in the system as a product of their past experiences, a work in progress, and a potential resource to others. Missouri was compelled to weave together a system that supports personal development and change and continuously work to improve it.

At age 17, a youth is considered an adult for new law violations. As a result, youth can be transferred to adult court only at a judge's discretion- no statutory waivers or direct file by prosecutors. The state's juvenile corrections agency, the Division of Youth Services (DYS), is a part of the Missouri Department of Social Services. DYS typically retains jurisdiction for juvenile offenders until discharged or until the youth reaches age 18, or in dual jurisdiction cases until 21. In addition to supervising juvenile offenders committed to its care, DYS administers a \$4 million per year juvenile Court Diversion program that provides funding to help courts

strengthen their community-based programs and reduce commitments to state custody.

- Missouri places youth who require confinement into smaller facilities located near the youths' homes and families.
- Missouri places youth into closely supervised small groups and applies a rigorous group treatment process offering extensive and ongoing individual attention.
- Missouri places great emphasis on keeping youth safe from physical aggression and from ridicule and emotional abuse; and it does so through constant staff supervision and supportive peer relationships.
- Missouri helps confined youth develop academic, pre-vocational, and communication skills that improve their ability to succeed that improve their ability to succeed following release—along with crucial insights into the roots of their delinquent behavior and new social competence to acknowledge and solve personal problems.
- Missouri reaches out to family members and involves them both as partners in the treatment process and as allies in the planning for success in the aftercare transition.

Missouri provides considerable support and supervision for youth transitioning home from a residential facility—conducting intensive aftercare planning prior to release, monitoring and mentoring youth closely.

Mandated Reporter

When we have **reasonable cause** to suspect that a child has been or may be subjected to abuse or neglect or we observe a child being subjected to conditions or circumstances, which would reasonably result in abuse or neglect, then we must **immediately** report. **Information for the Child Abuse/Neglect Hotline Unit.**

Reports are to be made immediately to the 24 hour, 7 day a week Child Abuse/Neglect Hotline telephone number (1-800-392-3738 or 1-844-CAN-TELL) maintained by Children's Division.

Mandated reporters may also report online at: <http://dss.mo.gov/cd/can.htm>

NAMES FOR VOLUNTEERS TO KNOW

<i>Chief Executive Officer</i>	Yusef Scoggin
<i>Senior Manager of Finance</i>	Cari Atkinson
<i>Director of Residential Services</i>	Moira Thompson
<i>Director of Support Services</i>	Marlan Harris
<i>Senior Manager of Human Services</i>	Jamel Williams
<i>Advancement Specialist, Marketing and Communications</i>	Rachel Eliser
<i>Senior Management of Advancement</i>	Rachael Lancey
<i>Individual Gifts Coordinator</i>	Nancy Totland
<i>Executive Assistant</i>	Shauna Coldiron

