



# Volunteer Guidelines and Requirements

VOLUNTEER COPY

At Epworth Children's Home we value the safety and emotional well-being of our children and volunteers. This is a first priority for every staff member. In order to help manage risk and manage the busy schedules of our children, we have adopted the following requirements and guidelines for volunteers working with children. They are based upon state level DSS regulations, national accrediting standards, practice wisdom, and best practice principles for volunteers working within a residential facility.

## Parameters and Boundaries:

Epworth's primary commitment is to the best interests of the residents who live on its campus. Epworth cannot allow conflicts of interest, whether real or perceived, to exist within its valued volunteer community. Epworth also cannot place volunteers in situations where they might inadvertently or intentionally interfere with placement decisions or placement goals. The following requirements and guidelines ensure that children remain at the center of care:

1. Current staff , including family members, may not serve as mentors or as leaders of volunteer groups
2. Former staff and their family members must wait one (1) year following departure from Epworth employment before being considered for an individual volunteer role at Epworth
3. Guardians and family members of current and/or previous residents cannot serve as volunteers
4. Volunteers may not initiate contact with a resident's family members/guardian for any reason
5. Persons who seek to be placed on a resident visitation list and circumvent Epworth's accepted principles of volunteer management cannot also be an Epworth volunteer. Epworth reserves the right to deny visitation of any person who interferes with a placement.
6. Epworth has the right to terminate a volunteer relationship at any time

### • **Clearance to Volunteer with Children:**

All Tutors, Cottage Partners, Faith Formation leaders, and Social Service/Clinical Volunteers are expected to meet the following requirements prior to their initial contact with any child at Epworth:

#### **Requirements:**

- Age 21 and older
- Attend Care Volunteer Information Session
- Completed Volunteer Packet to be kept on file
  1. Application
  2. Background Check Permission Form
  3. References
- Clear Criminal Background Check Received
- Clear DSS Check Received
- Clear Sex Offenders Online Check Completed
- Clear TB Test
- Fingerprint Background Check
- 3 Reference Checks Completed
- Attend a Program Volunteer Guidelines and Expectations Training
- Program Area Orientation Completed by Area Supervisor

#### **Additional Opportunities for Education (Not Required):**

- CARE Model Overview Training

### • **Additional Mentor Expectations**

Mentoring is a unique and demanding role that by its nature involves additional requirements. Potential mentors must meet the requirements stated above for all volunteers plus the following:

- Mentors must be at least 21 years of age, and 10 years older than the mentee

- Mentors will be required to complete a series of “matching” interviews so that Epworth staff may determine the best possible fit and matched my gender
- The decision of Epworth staff is always final in regard to mentor qualification
- Mentoring requires a minimum one (1) year commitment and at least 4 contact hours monthly
- Following initial assignment, the mentor/mentee relationship will be evaluated via two months of on-campus contact before off campus activities are permitted
- Mentors may not be in a mentoring relationship with more than one child, and they may not function as Cottage Partners during their mentoring tenure
- Mentors will maintain a one-to-one relationship with their mentee during their stay at Epworth regardless of cottage changes
- Mentors must contact the Cottage Coordinator or Case Manager two days prior to schedule a visit with their child
- Following the 2-month provisional period, mentors may be approved by Epworth to transport their mentee after furnishing proof of insurance, a valid SC driver’s license, and a 10-year DMV driving record
- Off-campus activities must have prior approval of Epworth staff and are never to involve a visit to the mentor’s home: activities must occur in the public domain
- Additional guidelines for successful and appropriate mentoring will be provided to mentors by the Volunteer Coordinator

**Never be alone with a child: (\*\*)**

- Please plan accordingly to make sure you are not put in a situation where you are alone with a child.
- **Every contact (activity) with an individual child, cottage or multiple cottages must be approved by your Volunteer Supervisor:**
  - Please contact your volunteer supervisor to request a visit or to schedule an activity. He or she will bring your request to the weekly calendar meeting held every Tuesday morning. This is also the place where transportation to activities is decided.
  - Once the request is approved, your Volunteer Supervisor will contact you to finalize the plan.
  - Please wait to inform children of ANY activities or contacts until it is approved in the weekly Tuesday Calendar Meeting and your supervisor has had time to inform Cottage staff of your request.
    - **This is very important: During the calendar meeting we take great care in making sure the needs of our children and all areas of campus are considered in decisions. If we are unable to honor a request, and the children are already expecting the activity they will be terribly disappointed.**
  - Once an activity has been approved it will be listed on the campus calendar so both staff and children are aware of the event.
    - NOTE: Who is your Volunteer Supervisor?
      - Cottage Partners: Volunteer Coordinator
      - Mentors: Volunteer Coordinator and Cottage Coordinator (However, scheduling may be done directly with the Cottage Coordinator)
      - Grounds & Maintenance-Building or Cottage Caretaker: Volunteer Coordinator in partnership with Chief Operations Officer
      - Faith Formation: Campus Pastor
      - Office/Funds Development: Director of Development
- **Meeting new children around campus:**
  - During your time on campus you will inevitably interact with other residents. It is okay to greet the other residents, but out of respect for the confidentiality of all our clients we ask that these interactions be brief. If you have concerns about a resident continually approaching you please notify your volunteer supervisor.

- **Appropriate Activities:**
  - Our children are only allowed to watch PG or G rated movies or video games or else approved by Epworth staff.
  - Please do not participate in or encourage inappropriate conversations, teasing, inappropriate language, alcohol use, drug use or smoking while on campus or while interacting with the children.
- **Pictures and Confidentiality:**
  - Do not take pictures of Epworth children. This is a DSS regulation. Staff members take pictures on a regular basis and give them to the children.
  - Do not share names or identification with others outside of the Epworth community. This too is a DSS regulation for the protection of the child.
  - Social media communication is not encouraged. Extending or accepting a request on a social media site such as facebook, twitter, instagram, or snapchat is not recommended when communicating with a child.
- **Cultural Awareness and Diversity:**
  - Epworth clients come from a wide variety of backgrounds and childhood experiences. When interacting with Epworth clients encourage positive relationships and show sensitivity to their childhood experiences, many of which may differ from your own.

### Encouraging Positive Relationships:

- **Staff or Medical Concerns for a child/cottage:**
  - If a child expresses concern about a staff member or another child to you, please encourage them to speak with their Case Manager. Please note that many of our children are learning to express concerns appropriately. Staff work closely with each child to redirect inappropriate behavior using the CARE Model. It is instinctive to want to affirm the child's concerns; however, without background information an affirmation could be misleading. Any child with a concern about a staff member or another resident must be encouraged to speak with their case manager, Ms. Cobbs or Mrs. Warble, our Vice President for Program Services.
  - If you are concerned about something you have seen or heard in regards to a child you are asked to express those concerns to Mrs. Warble at 803-256-7394. Please understand that our children arrive with many and various backgrounds. While behaviors such as yelling are inappropriate for you, it may be what they are used to. Staff members will be working to redirect these types of inappropriate responses and behaviors, but it takes time. We invite you to express your concerns to Mrs. Warble, because they will be able to assess the situation based on the progress of the child.
  - If you have any medical, clinical, or safety concerns about a child or youth, please notify the cottage staff immediately. Should a child indicate to you potential for self harm or you become suspicious of physical or sexual abuse, please return to the cottage and inform staff immediately. Staff will follow Epworth procedures and report to the Vice President of Program Services and other administrators as needed. *Always inform staff of anything that concerns you. These concerns need to remain confidential for the protection of the child.*
- **Staff Authority: under medical concerns**
  - Cottage Staff are responsible for all behavior redirection. Cottage staff work directly with the children on a daily basis to help them grow in their social skills, behavior responses and character. Please understand that staff members may be working on a particular issue with a child when you arrive at the cottage. While you may be ready to go and dive in to the event you have scheduled, the staff member may need to take some liberty with following through on a decision that redirects inappropriate behavior.

- Please honor the staff member’s wishes in this respect. If a child expresses disapproval for something in regards to redirection please do not take sides. Simply encourage him/her to talk with the staff member directly, the case manager or Ms. Cobbs.
- If you feel concern about what you have seen, you are encouraged to find a time afterwards to talk with Mrs. Warble
- **Length of Stay:**
  - We can estimate the length of stay for a child, but at no time can we be certain of this. If at all possible, we will let you know as soon as we find out if a child will be discharged from our care. It is difficult to lose a relationship, sometimes without warning and possibly without even the opportunity to say goodbye. This does happen given the circumstances of our children’s lives, and we appreciate your understanding and cooperation. We will do all we can to keep you informed.
  - Please provide notification to your campus coordinator or case manager if you find that your planned event or activity is ahead or behind its scheduled time.
- **Cottage Progression:**
  - Moving up to a new cottage at Epworth has always been seen as a right of passage, and while children are often sad and grieve the loss of their beloved staff and cottage mates, we want to strive to encourage the positive aspects of the progression.
  - As someone they trust, you can be a great support by encouraging them to spend time with new cottage mates and staff. Help them define the positives about being in an older cottage: more freedom, being with children their age, etc.
  - As new children are welcomed into the cottage or area you serve, your warm smile, listening ear and activity leadership can help them feel welcomed and cared for during their transition.
  - We recognize that you as a volunteer may grieve the loss of time you will be able to spend with each child who moves to another cottage. We encourage you to share those feelings with cottage staff to assist with this transition.
  - **NOTE:** In order to allow for staff and cottage partners in the new cottage to bond with the children coming into their cottage, activities may only be scheduled with the assigned cottage by their respective Cottage Partners. Individual contact between past cottage residents and their former cottage partners needs to be limited to whole campus activities and visits to the dining hall or worship.

When visiting campus, you are not expected to provide a gift for the child/children during each visit. We are eager for our children to have a relationship with you as the volunteer and not with the gifts you bring. As a volunteer, you are encouraged to contact Epworth Children’s Home at anytime. We have staff available to speak with you if you find that you are in need of a emotional support.

*\*\* Exception:* Approved Epworth tutors may maintain a one-to-one relationship with their student during tutoring hours, and mentors may maintain a one-to-one relationship with their mentee during their stay at Epworth.

I have read and understand Epworth Children's Home’s Volunteer Guidelines and Expectations. I understand that if I in anyway abuse these policies my service with the children may be terminated immediately by the leadership of Epworth Children's Home.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

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