



**Volunteers of America®**

**GREATER BATON ROUGE**

## **VOLUNTEER HANDBOOK**

REVISED by the Board of Directors of Volunteers of America Greater Baton Rouge at a meeting held the 25 day of June, 20 14.

## PREFACE

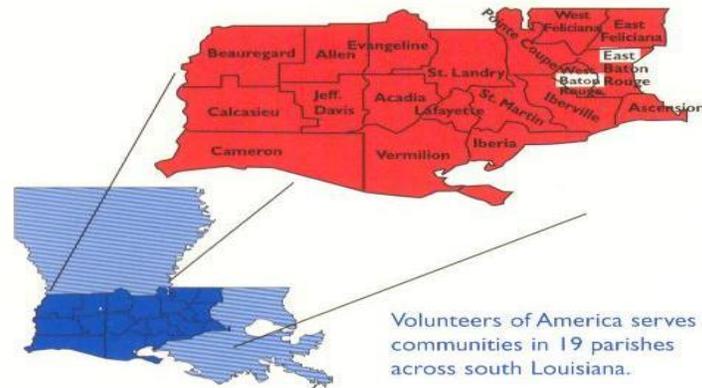
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Volunteers of America Greater Baton Rouge (VOAGBR) is the locally-governed, south Louisiana affiliate of Volunteers of America, one of the nation's oldest, largest and most comprehensive human services organizations. Established in Baton Rouge in 1921, our programs are designed to address specific community needs.

Our areas of focus include promoting self-sufficiency for the homeless, strengthening families in crisis, caring for the elderly, fostering independence in individuals with disabilities and supporting positive development for preschoolers in child care and children in the foster care system. We look at the whole person and address both urgent and ongoing needs, with the goal of helping people become as self-reliant as possible.

VOAGBR serves 19 parishes across south Louisiana, including the Greater Baton Rouge, Lafayette, and Lake Charles areas. VOAGBR is governed by a Board of Directors comprised of talented, respected volunteers from our community. They are a diverse group of people who reflect the individuals we serve. VOAGBR uplifts the most vulnerable people in our communities through the dedication of 400 employees and the assistance of over 1,000 volunteers annually.

More information can be found at [www.voagbr.org](http://www.voagbr.org).



## WELCOME

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It is with pleasure that we welcome you to Volunteers of America. Volunteers have been a vital part of our programs and services since the beginning of our organization. We are especially grateful that you have chosen to join with us to reach out to those who need our help and compassion.

As a Volunteers of America volunteer, you join a dedicated team. Your choice to get involved brings an added dimension of caring to those we serve.

This manual is intended as an orientation tool. It explains our policies and procedures for volunteering with Volunteers of America. It will help you to understand how to carry out your duties and achieve your best potential as a volunteer.

Thank you for your kindness and dedication.

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## **INTRODUCTION**

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We recognize that each volunteer brings to Volunteers of America a wealth of interests, resources, and areas of expertise. Accordingly, the involvement of each volunteer is dependent upon his/her personal talents.

The purpose of this manual is to aid you in getting acquainted with the organization and provide guidance to staff and volunteers engaged in volunteer involvement and management efforts. The corporate name of our organization is Volunteers of America Greater Baton Rouge, Inc. For ease of reading, the term “Volunteers of America” or “VOAGBR” is used throughout this manual to refer to the corporate body.

The contents of these policies and procedures are presented as a matter of information only and supersede any previous policy and procedures for volunteers of VOAGBR. The management of VOAGBR reserves the right, as it’s sole discretion, to modify, revoke, suspend, terminate or change any and all such policies in whole or in part, at any time, with or without notice.

We look forward to successful cooperation among all who are dedicated to the goals and future of Volunteers of America.

### **MISSION STATEMENT**

Volunteers of America is a movement organized to reach and uplift all people and bring them to the knowledge and active service of God.

Volunteers of America, illustrating the presence of God through all that we do, serves people and communities in need and creates opportunities for people to experience the joy of serving others.

Volunteers of America measures its success in positive change in the lives of individuals and communities we serve.

### **VOLUNTEER PROGRAM GOAL**

The volunteer program will focus on and support the organization’s goals and objectives by providing meaningful partnerships and opportunities for community involvement and effective utilization of community resources.

# VOLUNTEER POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

## I. VOLUNTEER POLICIES

### A. CRIMINAL BACKGROUND SCREENING

As appropriate for the protection of the people we serve and based on program licensing requirements, volunteers in certain assignments may be asked to submit to additional screening which may include, reference checks and/or direct background criminal references, etc.

### B. RECRUITMENT

Volunteers shall be recruited by the agency on a proactive basis, with the intent of broadening and expanding the volunteer involvement of the community. VOAGBR strives to maintain a diverse volunteer base.

### C. GENERAL OFFICE

- **Hours.** Volunteer hours and schedules are established by each program/department.
- **Dress.** Volunteers must dress in a professional manner and consistent with job duties and program needs.
- **Smoking.** Smoking is allowed in designated smoking areas only.
- **Worksite.** An appropriate worksite shall be established for volunteer use, as needed. This worksite shall contain necessary facilities, equipment, and space to enable volunteers to effectively and comfortably perform their duties.
- **Valuables.** Volunteers should not bring any type of valuables when volunteering. Proper precautions should be taken in storing purses. VOAGBR assumes NO responsibility for the loss, theft, or damage to any volunteer's property including cash.

### D. CATEGORIES OF VOLUNTEERS

A **volunteer** is a person who provides service to VOAGBR for which no monetary compensation is given or expected. Volunteers generally fall into one of the categories described below:

- **Adult Volunteers** are individuals who are 18 years of age or older, who are not receiving any credit with school or court.
- **Youth and Student volunteers** are usually junior and high school age volunteers, however, younger aged youth may be permitted in some volunteer opportunities. These are generally short-term volunteers who may or may not be fulfilling community service or service learning requirements for school. They may participate as an individual or with a group but adult supervision is always required for on-site activities. They are minimally 15 years of age (though some programs' requirements may differ).
- **Interns and Service Learning Students** are individuals enrolled in high school or college, receiving credits or not, who have specific curriculum objectives they wish to fulfill.

- **Groups** are those belonging to an established network such as church groups, corporate groups, civic organizations, social clubs or family unit. Many groups participate in one-time or short-term projects that may be completed at a VOAGBR program or at their own group site (collecting canned goods, clothing drives, etc).
- **Employees as volunteers** are accepted, provided that the volunteer's services are not coerced, the services involve work which is outside the scope of the normal staff duties, and the services are provided outside of the usual working hours.
- **Clients and relatives of clients as volunteers** may be accepted as volunteer, where such service does not constitute an obstruction to or conflict with provision of services to the client or to others served. Relatives of clients may also serve as volunteers, but will not be placed in a position of direct service to members of their family who are receiving services.
- **Community Service Workers** are individuals assigned specific community service time requirements based on a court-ordered alternate sentencing, restitution program or other mandated efforts such as welfare reform. VOAGBR generally does not provide volunteer work to fulfill these types of requirements but reserves the right to so on a case by case basis.

## **E. VOLUNTEER FILES**

The purpose of this policy is to provide for the appropriate handling of volunteer information.

Volunteer files are maintained at each region. Volunteer files will consist of volunteer application, volunteer service agreement, acknowledgement of volunteer policy and procedure handbook, confidentiality & liability statements, photo/video release form, volunteer job description, background permission form and sign in sheets. The file may also contain, when applicable, items such as additional references, criminal records, volunteer discharge form, etc.

Active volunteers are entitled to review their volunteer file in the presence of the volunteer coordinator.

## **F. UNUSUAL INCIDENTS/ACCIDENTS/ABUSE**

Any incidents that involve a client, visitor, volunteer, or employee, which is not consistent with normal agency routine, must be reported immediately to a staff supervisor or program manager.

# **II. TIME ACCOUNTABILITY**

## **A. ATTENDANCE**

Volunteers are expected to be punctual and reliable. Volunteers are asked to call their supervisors and to provide as much notice as possible when unable to fulfill their commitment to serve as scheduled or when they will be unavoidably delayed for a shift.

## **B. SIGN IN SHEETS**

Volunteers are responsible for signing in and out every time they are on site or complete volunteer work. A standard time sheet turned in monthly by the supervisor allows tracking

of both time and the specific activities in which volunteers are engaged. Volunteer time includes any planning, meeting, and training time involved. Accurate records are important for insurance purposes, references and reporting organizational needs.

Group time should also be recorded. Each activity should be counted as well as any planning and/or preparation time involved.

### **III. VOLUNTEER BENEFITS**

#### **A. SPIRITUAL**

Volunteering with VOAGBR offers volunteers the opportunity to serve God through serving others. Volunteers as well as staff are welcome to seek the services of VOA ministers as well as to attend spiritual services.

#### **B. REFERENCES**

Upon request, references are provided for volunteers in good standing.

#### **C. TAX DEDUCTIONS**

Income tax deductions may be available for certain aspects of volunteer service. Tax advisors or the Internal Revenue Service should be contacted for specific details.

### **IV. PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT**

#### **A. ORIENTATION**

Most volunteers are required to participate in a general agency orientation as a prerequisite to service.

#### **B. ON SITE TRAINING**

Volunteers will receive specific on site training to provide them with the information and skills necessary to perform their volunteer assignment.

#### **C. SUPERVISION**

Supervision, the formal and informal process of guiding a volunteer's activities, is the responsibility of the program in which the volunteer is placed.

#### **D. COMMUNICATIONS/ EVALUATIONS**

VOAGBR encourages open communication between volunteer and staff. Volunteers are invited and encouraged to share their ideas and suggestions. Volunteers are periodically asked to complete an on-line satisfaction survey.

#### **E. DISMISSAL**

Dismissal of a volunteer may take place when the volunteer fails to adhere to VOAGBR's policies and procedures. In the event that a volunteer must be dismissed, the supervisor will notify the volunteer coordinator who will process the discharge record.

When volunteers do not perform their work functions in a satisfactory manner, corrective action including dismissal may be necessary. Listed below are examples of reasons that a volunteer may be corrected and/or dismissed. This list is not intended to be exhaustive, merely illustrative. Volunteers may be corrected and/or dismissed for reasons other than those listed here.

1. Discourteous treatment of any other person (client, public, staff or other volunteer).
2. Theft.
3. Violation of agency policies including, but not limited to, conflict of interest and code of ethics policies.
4. Dishonesty about volunteer-related matters to supervisors, other volunteers, staff, clients, other agencies, or the public.
5. Gross misconduct.
6. Possession, sale, use, or being under the influence of an illegal substance, intoxicant or alcohol while volunteering.
7. Neglectful or willful actions which endanger clients, staff or other volunteers.
8. Failure to perform volunteer assignment or accept supervision.
9. Insubordination.

#### **F. INTERNAL INVESTIGATIONS**

Volunteers are asked to cooperate completely in any internal investigation conducted by VOAGBR.

### **V. APPROPRIATE WORKPLACE CONDUCT**

#### **A. PURPOSE**

VOAGBR will not tolerate verbal or physical conduct by an employee or volunteer which harasses, disrupts or interferes with another's work performance or which creates an intimidating, offensive or hostile environment.

#### **B. PRODUCTIVE WORK ENVIRONMENT**

VOAGBR recognizes that for employees and volunteers to be most effective in their work they must work in an environment free from harassment. While all forms of harassment are prohibited, it is the policy of VOAGBR to emphasize that sexual harassment is specifically prohibited. Each supervisor has a responsibility to maintain a work place free of any form of sexual harassment. No supervisor shall threaten or insinuate, either explicitly or implicitly, that a volunteer should submit to sexual advances or that refusal to submit to sexual advances will adversely affect the volunteer's assigned duties, shifts or any other condition of placement.

Other sexually harassing conduct in the work place, whether committed by supervisors, non-supervisory personnel, or volunteers are also prohibited. Such conduct may include, but is not limited to:

1. Sexual flirtations, touching, advances or propositions.
2. Verbal abuse of a sexual nature, including jokes or stories with a sexual theme or language.
3. Graphic or suggestive comments about an individual's dress or body.
4. Sexually degrading words to describe an individual.
5. The display in the work place of sexually suggestive objects or pictures, including nude photographs.
6. Other similar offensive conduct.

Racial harassment also is specifically prohibited. Each supervisor has a responsibility to maintain a workplace free of any and all forms of harassment based on race or national origin. Harassment based on race or national origin includes, but it not limited to:

1. Verbal abuse regarding race or national origin.
2. Slurs or epithets about an individual's race or national origin.
3. Jokes that belittle or mock an individual's race or national origin.
4. Distribution of literature or material which is degrading of any race or national origin.

Any volunteer who believes that the actions or words of a supervisor, employee or fellow volunteer constitute unwelcome harassment of a sexual or racial nature has a responsibility to report the incident as soon as possible to his/her supervisor and/or to the volunteer coordinator or designee.

If a volunteer, for any reason, is not able to follow the reporting procedure outlined above, he/she may contact the Chief Development Officer at (225) 387-0061.

All complaints of harassment are investigated promptly and confidentially. Retaliation against a volunteer who reports harassment will not be tolerated. In all cases, the volunteer is to be advised of the management's findings and conclusions. Any volunteer, employee, supervisor or manager who is found after appropriate investigation to have engaged in harassment of another volunteer or employee will be subject to appropriate disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

### **C. VOLUNTEER CONCERNS**

It is the intent of VOAGBR to be fair, equitable and consistent in the supervision and management of all volunteers. Volunteers are encouraged to bring concerns regarding their work or work environment to the attention of their supervisor and/or the volunteer coordinator.

### **D. CONFIDENTIALITY**

Volunteers are responsible for maintaining the confidentiality of all proprietary or privileged information to which they are exposed while serving as a volunteer. Information, both verbal and written, regarding clients, volunteers and employees is to be kept confidential at all times and not to be discussed with anyone other than the appropriate staff members. Failure to maintain confidentiality may result in termination of the volunteer's relationship with the agency or other corrective action.

### **E. VOLUNTEER/CLIENT RELATIONSHIPS**

Volunteers must limit their relationship with the clients to the parameters of the program to which they have been assigned. Volunteers are expected to maintain professional helping relationships with the clients we serve. No personal involvement of an economic, sexual, coercive, manipulative or threatening nature shall exist. Volunteers are prohibited from lending money or personal property to the clients. Volunteers must adhere to program specific policies and procedures regarding client interactions. The information will be reviewed with you in the site orientation.

## **F. MEDIA**

We encourage volunteers to share our mission! “Like Us” and “Follow Us” on Facebook: /VOAGBR, Twitter: /VOAGBR, and YouTube: VOAGBR1921. However, there are policies and procedures on sharing content online.

### ***Media Policy***

Do not post any photos of clients, clients’ names or any confidential information on any website or social media site without permission from a staff person. Do not post photos of Volunteers of America staff without their consent. Breach of this policy will be cause for immediate release from the volunteer program.

## **G. REPRESENTATION OF THE AGENCY**

Volunteers are not authorized to act as a representative of VOAGBR in any manner to the media, outside organizations, or to the community without consent of the agency. Volunteers are strictly prohibited from contractually obligating VOAGBR in any way.

## **H. PROFESSIONALISM**

A volunteer’s attitude toward volunteer work needs to be professional. Volunteers have made a commitment to the assigned work, to those who direct them in the program, to colleagues, to clients and to Volunteers of America.

## **I. GRATUITY/GIFTS**

Volunteers are not allowed to accept any form of gifts from clients.

# **VI. SAFETY**

The personal safety and health of each volunteer of VOAGBR is of primary importance. The prevention of occupationally induced injuries and diseases is of such consequence that, to the greatest extent possible, VOAGBR will take all reasonable steps necessary for personal safety and health. However, a safe working environment is everybody’s responsibility.

Cooperation in all safety matters is essential. This applies not only to supervisor and employee/volunteer, but also among fellow employees/volunteers. Only through such efforts can the best safety record be established and preserved. Our objective at Volunteers of America is ZERO accidents and injuries.

Volunteers should consult with their program regarding specific procedures for reporting accidents.

## **A. DRUG FREE WORKPLACE**

All volunteers are forbidden to use or possess alcohol or illegal drugs at any time during their shift or anywhere in the workplace. Volunteers are also forbidden to engage in any sale or other transaction involving illegal drugs on the agency’s premises. Violators will be subject to immediate dismissal. In addition, any volunteer under the influence of alcohol or drugs on the site or arrested on a drug-related matter outside of working a shift will be subject to immediate dismissal.

### **1. LEGAL DRUGS**

Legal drugs include any medication or drug which is prescribed to a volunteer by a licensed physician and over the counter drugs which have been legally obtained and

which are being used for the purpose for which they were prescribed or manufactured.

## **2. ILLEGAL DRUGS**

Illegal drugs are defined as drugs prohibited by Federal, State or local law, or prescription drugs being used by a person other than for whom they were prescribed.

## **3. ALCOHOL**

Possession and/or consumption of alcohol or being under the influence of alcohol in or on the grounds of the office, property, vehicle or workplace of the corporation while engaged in business for VOAGBR is prohibited.

## **B. TRANSPORTATION**

Volunteers are not allowed to transport clients.

# **VII. CODE OF ETHICS**

Volunteers of America is founded on and guided by Christian principles. With this foundation, the following Code of Ethics has been developed to be consistent with the values that drive these principles. All volunteers are responsible for conducting themselves in conformance with this code.

- I will be conscious of the fact that everything I do, directly or indirectly, has the potential to reflect upon Volunteers of America as a whole.
- I will conduct myself at all times with openness, forthrightness, and honesty in dealing with people and organizations, both internally and externally.
- I will hold myself to the highest possible standard of conduct reflective of the work that I do, striving always to avoid even the appearance of impropriety.
- I will treat everyone with dignity, worth, respect, concern, courtesy and fairness.
- I will be sensitive to and seek solutions for all instances of discrimination and social injustice that I observe.
- I will respect and comply with all applicable laws and regulations and the defined standards of conduct of my own profession.
- I will exercise prudent stewardship of all Volunteers of America resources.
- I will avoid all conflict of interest relationships with board members, staff, suppliers, those we serve, and other organizations with whom I deal, unless disclosed and approved.
- I will accept no gifts or favors which might influence the performance of my volunteer responsibilities.
- I will also adhere to and comply with the defined standards of conduct of my own profession.

## **VII. CONFLICT OF INTEREST**

Volunteers of America expects all directors, employees, and volunteers to adopt a high ethical standard of conduct in the performance of their duties, observing all laws and regulations governing business transactions, competing fairly with others and using VOAGBR funds only for legitimate and ethical purposes.

If a volunteer or a member of his/her immediate family shall accept gifts from any person or firm which does business with VOAGBR or any of its affiliated corporations, the volunteer must report the interest to the President/CEO of VOAGBR and must not represent VOAGBR in such transactions.

Volunteers are expected to fully comply with the conflict of interest policy and discuss any potential conflicts or incidents with their supervisors.

## **IX. SOLICITATIONS**

Volunteers of America Greater Baton Rouge has a long-standing policy regarding solicitation on premises. The only exception to this policy is the annual United Way Campaign conducted by the agency or any other campaign for which the agency is a sponsor or beneficiary.

1. No distribution of literature or printed matter on VOAGBR premises.
2. VOAGBR work areas, bulletin boards or computer systems may not be used to distribute literature or information not related to VOAGBR.
3. No solicitation of any kind is allowed at any time on VOAGBR premises.

Volunteers not conducting themselves in a manner consistent with these guidelines will be subject to corrective action or dismissal.

## **X. USE OF ELECTRONIC MAIL**

The purpose of this policy is to set forth VOAGBR's policy on access to and disclosure of electronic mail messages sent or received by volunteers who use the electronic mail system and on the proper use of the electronic mail system in general.

The electronic mail and other information systems of VOAGBR are not to be used in a manner that may be disruptive, offensive to others, or harmful to morale.

All messages are the property of VOAGBR, and volunteers have no privacy interest in the messages communicated on the e-mail system. VOAGBR reserves the right to access and disclose all messages sent over its electronic mail system for any purpose.



**Volunteers of America®**  
**GREATER BATON ROUGE**

**VOLUNTEER HANDBOOK ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

I understand that it is my responsibility to review the VOAGBR Volunteer Handbook prior to beginning volunteer work with the agency. I have been informed that an electronic copy is available at [www.voagbr.org](http://www.voagbr.org). I understand and agree to abide by the provisions and agreements contained within.

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Name

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Signature

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Date