

# Tender Mercies Volunteer Handbook



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## Welcome to Tender Mercies!

On behalf of the Board of Trustees, staff, and residents of Tender Mercies, thank you for choosing Tender Mercies to give of your time and talents. For more than 35 years, volunteers have been a vital part of helping Tender Mercies achieve its mission. Whether serving a meal, painting, landscaping, calling Bingo, or serving on a committee, volunteers help transform lives and provide security, dignity, and community with and for the 199 men and women who call Tender Mercies home.

To make your volunteering experience positive and rewarding, we have created a *Volunteer Handbook* that provides valuable information about:

- Tender Mercies History
- Tender Mercies Mission
- Volunteer Opportunities
- Volunteer Rights & Responsibilities
- Volunteer Coordinator's Contact Information
- Volunteer Testimonials
- Becoming a Volunteer
- Location and Directions
- Meal Preparation Suggestions
- Donation Wish List
- Volunteer FAQs
- Volunteer Code of Conduct
- Safety & Liability
- Volunteer Release of Liability & Confidentiality Agreement
- Memorandum of Understanding

Tender Mercies *Volunteer Handbook* can be found at: [www.tendermerciesinc.org](http://www.tendermerciesinc.org). If you would prefer to receive a hard copy of the handbook, or if you have further questions, contact the *Volunteer Coordinator* at: 513-639-7027.

Thank you, once again, for volunteering -- you are making a real difference in the lives of the residents of Tender Mercies.

Sincerely,



Russell Winters  
Chief Executive Officer

## **Purpose of Tender Mercies Volunteer Handbook**

Thank you for joining Tender Mercies dedicated group of over 2,000 volunteers who help to assure formerly homeless adults with mental illness receive daily nourishment and hope.

This *Volunteer Handbook* was prepared to give you essential information about Tender Mercies and help you to feel more comfortable. We know it may not answer all your questions, therefore, please feel free to reach out to Tender Mercies *Volunteer Coordinator* (Contact information on Page 6).

We believe you will sincerely enjoy your volunteer work and will be inspired by your interactions with the residents. Thank you for giving your time and talents to positively impact the lives of others!

## About Tender Mercies

### *Our History*

Tender Mercies was founded in 1985 by three clergymen working among the homeless in the Over-the-Rhine area of Cincinnati. Their work was making them increasingly aware of the plight of the homeless with mental illness. The policy of deinstitutionalization, which had reduced the number of psychiatric beds in Hamilton County from 4,000 to 400, held out the promise that people with chronic mental illness would be able to live independently in the community. However, our community was ill-equipped to deal with their ongoing needs. Hundreds were ending up on the streets. The mission of Tender Mercies, as established by the founders and which remains the same today, is: ***Tender Mercies transforms the lives of homeless adults with mental illness by providing security, dignity, and community in a place they call home.***

Fr. Chris Hall, who would become Tender Mercies first director, was working with two women who had been released from Rollman's Psychiatric Institute with nothing but cab fare to the Drop Inn Center, a shelter for the homeless. Through Fr. Chris's efforts, these women found housing in an apartment building on Race Street. He helped them apply for social security benefits, manage their income, and secure ongoing support in coping with their mental illness. But despite his efforts to help these women, tragedy struck. Within two months, in their own apartments, one of the women was brutally raped and the other murdered.

In the face of these violent acts, Fr. Chris and two other clergymen, Randy La Fond and Edward Slater, deliberated and responded. They met with the owner of the building where these women had lived. The property owner agreed to allow them to manage the building, and, through attrition, the Race Street property soon became the permanent home for 12 previously homeless women with histories of chronic mental illness. It was the beginning of Tender Mercies.

### *Our Mission*

Tender Mercies transforms the lives of homeless adults with mental illness by providing security, dignity, and community in a place they call home.

- Security means a housing environment where residents' personal safety is a priority.
- Dignity means a housing environment that allows residents to develop personal, social, and economic strengths.
- Community is a regular, predictable housing environment that offers a sense of family, while affirming the individual.

We achieve our mission by maintaining 199 units of permanent supportive housing in 6 buildings in the Over-the-Rhine and the near West End neighborhoods. Our model of housing is based on the belief that by addressing the root causes of homelessness, we can help an individual break the cycle of homelessness once he or she leaves Tender Mercies. We accomplish our goals by providing an array of supportive services along with permanent housing.

### *Our Purpose*

The purpose of Tender Mercies is to provide permanent housing and supportive services for homeless adults with the histories of severe mental illness. Our permanent supportive housing model addresses the root causes of homelessness, thereby preventing a return to the streets for our region's most vulnerable persons.

As a solution for homelessness, our supportive housing model addresses two key problems:

- Without housing, there is no basis from which to mitigate the factors which lead to homelessness.
- Without supportive services, a resident is likely to regress for the reasons that led to their loss of housing in the first place.

To help residents improve their quality of life, we provide security 24 hours a day/365 day a year, medication monitoring, meals, laundry, assistance with benefits/income/vocational readiness, job training, computer training, GED/literacy education, living skills (hygiene, budgeting, appointment scheduling), counseling, and symptom management.

## **Volunteer Opportunities at Tender Mercies**

The volunteer program is an integral part of Tender Mercies continuum of services. Volunteer opportunities include:

- Preparing and serving meals to residents
- Facilities enhancements, such as painting, landscaping, and cleaning
- Clerical support
- Facilitating recreational activities with residents
- Mentoring residents
- Fundraising and development assistance
- Other resident-focused service projects

### **Volunteer Rights and Responsibilities**

Volunteers have the right to feel safe, the right to air grievances/concerns, the right to instruction and direction, the right to supervision, and the right to discontinue service. In return, volunteers are expected to perform tasks and assignments to the best of their ability and not to place any undue burdens upon the agency. As a volunteer, you have the responsibility to:

- Be dependable
- Let Tender Mercies *Volunteer Coordinator* know, as early as possible, if you are unable to attend a scheduled volunteer event
- Respect resident confidentiality
- Be courteous and respectful to residents, staff, and other volunteers
- Participate in the feedback process by letting the organization know how you feel about your volunteer experience and by giving constructive suggestions for improvement

### **Who do I contact?**

Tender Mercies has a full-time *Volunteer Coordinator* who oversees all phases of volunteer services to ensure that resources are managed effectively for the benefit of the residents, volunteers, and the organization. The *Volunteer Coordinator*:

- Oversees volunteers and donated resources
- Manages and coordinates projects related to volunteers
- Maintains records of in-kind donations and volunteers
- Represents Tender Mercies in order to publicize the mission and needs of the agency

Volunteer Coordinator

Office Telephone Number: 513-639-7027 Email: [volunteer1@tendermerciesinc.org](mailto:volunteer1@tendermerciesinc.org)

If you are unable to reach the *Volunteer Coordinator*, you may contact the Chief Operations Officer at 513-639-7020

## Volunteer Testimonials

*“I initially got involved through St. Xavier High School when my son was a sophomore. Caleb, along with a small group from the high school, served the residents the 3rd Sunday of each month, played board games with the residents, and interacted with them. I continued to serve which gives me an opportunity to reach those that are far less fortunate and establish a relationship while I am giving back. I do believe that Jesus sent us here to serve and not to be served. Tender Mercies touches the lives of many from all walks of life. I am truly thankful that I can be a blessing to that ministry.”*

**-Monica Swope, Volunteer since 2014**

*“Although I have done meals periodically for a number of years, it was not until I retired from teaching three years ago that our group started bringing meals to Tender Mercies on a monthly basis and playing bingo with the residents once or twice a year.*

*I think I speak for all the members of our group when I say that we look forward each month to our time at Tender Mercies. The kindness and appreciation shown to us by the residents is both heartwarming and rewarding. We get more from our interaction with the residents than we give to them. It has been a wonderful experience for all of us. Thanks for the opportunity to be a part of Tender Mercies!!”*

**-Mary Ann Klonne, Volunteer since 2014**

*“When ‘Wednesday Night Friends’ started serving dinner in 2001, we had no idea what to expect. We immediately felt the appreciation of the residents. We look forward to our monthly ‘Wednesdays’ as a fun and fulfilling experience. We are pleased to continue our service to those wonderful residents.”*

**-Jean Klank, Volunteer since 2001**

*“I have thoroughly enjoyed and been touched by getting to know the residents of Tender Mercies over the past few years. I think most of us live in our own socio-economic/racial strata in this society and people living in poverty are unknown, and sometimes misunderstood, because of this segregation. Many people are born into situations that severely limit their opportunities for stability, education and job opportunities. The cycle repeats over and over. My 39 years as a psychiatric social worker has taught me that when poverty is coupled with mental illness, the result is more devastating than either of the two alone. They become isolated in dangerous, unstable situations. Tender Mercies gives them the opportunity for a safe, stable environment and to be treated with dignity, which I believe is the right of every person on this earth.”*

**-Kathy Norton, Volunteer since 2015**



## **Becoming a Tender Mercies Volunteer**

### ***Determining Volunteer Placement***

Prior to volunteering at Tender Mercies, all potential individual volunteers, or a contact person for a group of volunteers, will engage in a conversation with the *Volunteer Coordinator*. The purpose of this discussion is to gauge the interests and abilities of the volunteer or group, to match them to the most suitable volunteer role, as well as to help the volunteers learn more about the agency. Background and reference checks may be required for certain volunteer positions, at the discretion of the *Volunteer Coordinator*. **All volunteers must sign two forms: 1) Confidentiality Agreement & Release of Liability and 2) Memorandum of Understanding (See: Pages 21 & 22 of this handbook).**

### ***Orientation and Training***

All volunteers will receive appropriate orientation so that they may perform their tasks to the best of their abilities. This includes relevant information about Tender Mercies mission, values & principles, goals, policies, and procedures, as well as relevant information for their specific assignment.

### ***Supervision***

All volunteers report directly to the *Volunteer Coordinator*. In situations when the volunteer is working in other departments, other staff may oversee volunteers. In this situation, both staff and volunteers should report to the *Volunteer Coordinator* with questions or concerns.

### ***Feedback and Evaluation***

The *Volunteer Coordinator* is responsible for providing constructive feedback to all volunteers concerning their work. The purpose of providing feedback is to make suggestions to enhance volunteer effectiveness, discuss volunteer suggestions on how to improve the program, address any concerns volunteers might have, and express appreciation for volunteer work.

## Directions, Parking, and Building Access

Tender Mercies primary office is located at: 27 West 12<sup>th</sup> St., Cincinnati, Ohio 45202.

**Enter Tender Mercies' parking lot from Central Parkway.**

### ***Going WEST on Central Parkway***

Go past Vine Street and make a right onto Baldwin Alley. If you cross over Race Street, you have gone too far. Baldwin Alley is between Vine and Race off Central Parkway.

### ***Going EAST on Central Parkway***

Get into the left turn lane at Central Parkway and Vine Street and make a U-turn to get onto Central Parkway going west. Make a right onto Baldwin Alley. If you cross over Race Street, you have gone too far. Baldwin Alley is between Vine and Race off Central Parkway.

### ***Once on Baldwin Alley***

Follow the blue and white Tender Mercies signs until you see an intercom system, which will be on your left side.

- Push the gray intercom button to open gate. Tell the staff person who answers the intercom that you are there to volunteer.
- **You may park anywhere in the GATED lot.**
- Once you get out of your car, follow the patio gate until you see a door letting you out onto 12<sup>th</sup> Street.
- Once you exit out of the gate, PSH2 Hall and Spaeth & Kelly Hall will be to the left. Dana Hotel will be to the right. Harkavy Hall will be directly across from Spaeth & Kelly Hall on 12<sup>th</sup> Street.
- Please note that there is additional paid parking located at the Washington Park Garage (1230 Elm Street), the Mercer Commons Garage (Vine Street, between 13th & 14th), and the 12<sup>th</sup> and Vine Parking Lot.
- **DO NOT PARK IN THE OPEN LOT (Off of Central Parkway) BEHIND TENDER MERCIES' BUILDINGS OR YOU COULD BE TOWED.**

## Meal Preparation Suggestions

The residents are appreciative of meals provided by volunteers. We understand that cooking for many people makes certain dishes easier to prepare than others. Fried chicken is always a favorite! **If you can, please be mindful of sugar, fat, and salt. Many residents struggle with various health issues, such as diabetes and high cholesterol.**

## Donation Suggestions

Your donations help the residents make their house a home and make it possible for them to regain stability and independence. We deeply appreciate your generosity!

Due to a lack of space and other considerations, there are some items we cannot accept. Please see below for a list of items and guidelines.

### *Items We Accept*

- Hygiene items (e.g., Full size shampoo, conditioner, body wash, soap)
- Cleaning products
- Non-perishable food items
- Kitchen items (e.g., Pots, pans, microwaves, coffee makers)
- Games and miscellaneous items (e.g., Puzzle books, bingo prizes)
- New towels, wash cloths, clothing, twin-sized bedding (fire retardant preferred), pillows

### *Items We Do Not Accept*

- Perishable food items
- Furniture, used clothing, used bedding, used shoes, children's items or towels

*These items are valuable and make a difference in the lives of our residents, however we do not have the space or staff resources to sort and distribute these items. Please consider donating them to Salvation Army or NewLife Furniture, as our residents are referred to these agencies.*



# Donation Wish List

***Please note that all towels, blankets, sheets, pillows, clothing, and similar items should be NEW.***

***We cannot accept these items if used.***

### **For Residents**

- |                      |                          |                           |
|----------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------|
| Twin Sheet Sets      | Twin Blankets/Comforters | Pillows                   |
| Radio Alarm Clocks   | Bath Towels (colored)    | Bath Washcloths (colored) |
| Men’s Boxers (L-3XL) | Men’s T-shirts (L-3XL)   | Flip Flops (size 10+)     |
| Hand Lotion          | Mesh Laundry Baskets     |                           |

### **Building Supplies**

- |                    |                |             |                  |
|--------------------|----------------|-------------|------------------|
| Dish Towels        | Dish Cloths    | Dish Soap   | Plastic Utensils |
| Laundry Soap/Pods  | Paper Plates   | Lysol       | Plastic Cups     |
| Disinfecting Wipes | Hand Sanitizer | Can Openers | Cooking Oil      |

### **For Residents Moving to Independent Living**

- |                              |                    |                  |
|------------------------------|--------------------|------------------|
| Shower Curtains/Liners/Rings | Mops & Buckets     | Pots & Pans      |
| Brooms & Dustpans            | Household Cleaners | Kitchen Utensils |

**If you have any questions, please contact the Volunteer Coordinator at 513-639-7027 or [volunteer1@tendermerciesinc.org](mailto:volunteer1@tendermerciesinc.org)**

## Frequently Asked Questions

### ***Can I take pictures of the residents?***

To protect the privacy of the residents, we ask that your pictures do not include the faces of the residents. We encourage you to take pictures of the members of your group, the items you brought, the set-up of the activity, and the exchanging hands between residents and volunteers.

### ***What age do you need to be to volunteer?***

Volunteer opportunities, like serving a meal or hosting Bingo, are perfect for school-aged children, and we encourage parents to bring their well-mannered children if they can remain throughout the duration of the volunteer service. All volunteers under the age of 18 are required to be accompanied by a chaperone.

### ***Can I donate food?***

In the interest of residents' health, Tender Mercies will *not* accept food that has been opened (i.e., food that is not sealed in the original packaging). If you are interested in donating food, please contact the *Volunteer Coordinator* so this can be evaluated on a case-by-case basis.

### ***Can I donate clothing?***

All donated clothing must be NEW. We *cannot* accept used clothing. Tender Mercies accepts donations of clothing, per our *Donation Wish List* (See: Page 11) including: flip-flops, slippers, t-shirts, socks, and underwear.

### ***What should I do when I have a donation?***

If you would like to make a financial donation to Tender Mercies, contact the *Development Director* at 513-639-7021.

If you would like to make an In-Kind Donation, contact the *Volunteer Coordinator* (Contact information on Page 6) to schedule a drop-off time. Giving advanced notice helps us to prepare and maximize our limited storage space.

## Volunteer Code of Conduct

Volunteers are held to the following standards in their interactions and relationships with present and former residents of Tender Mercies. Tender Mercies holds high expectations of volunteers to follow this code of conduct. Violations of this code of conduct are likely to lead to termination of the volunteer relationship. Report any observations or concerns about violations of this *Code of Conduct* to the *Volunteer Coordinator*.

### ***Ethical Standards***

Since volunteer behavior reflects directly on Tender Mercies, volunteers will perform their work in an ethical manner, engaging in courteous, respectful relationships with staff, volunteers, and residents. All volunteers are bound to the same ethical standards that apply to paid staff of Tender Mercies.

Volunteers are expected to serve as role models for residents. Volunteers are to maintain high standards of personal conduct. As such, volunteers are to abide by all rules and policies in place for residents.

### ***Abuse and Neglect of Residents***

Abuse, neglect, or exploitation of residents are expressly prohibited. Under no circumstances will physical, verbal, or psychological abuse or neglect of residents be tolerated. This includes humiliating, frightening or expletive methods of interaction or discipline.

Abuse refers to any of the following:

- An act, or a failure to act, that results or could result in emotional or physical injury to an adult, unless the act is done in self-defense or by accident.
- An act that constitutes "sexual activity" as defined in section 2907.01 of the Ohio Revised Code and would constitute an offense under Chapter 2907 of the Ohio Revised Code.
- Insulting or coarse language or gestures directed toward an adult that subject him/her to humiliation or degradation.
- An act that deprives an adult of real or personal property by fraudulent or illegal means.

Neglect refers to the purposeful or reckless disregard of the health, safety, or psychological needs of the person served by Tender Mercies. It is the duty of every staff member and volunteer to immediately report all actual, suspected, or alleged incidents of abuse and/or neglect of residents. Failure to do so is considered contrary to the professional character of the agency.

### ***Resident Boundaries***

- Volunteers must set and enforce appropriate professional boundaries with residents. Leading a present or former resident to believe that the relationship is other than a professional one can be hurtful and damaging to both parties. Resident relationships can never be used to meet volunteer needs.
- Sexual contact or activity with any resident of Tender Mercies is strictly forbidden, regardless of the issue of consent. Sexual contact or activity includes, but is not limited to, kissing, massaging, banter, sexual touch or intimacies, developing a dating

relationship, viewing pornography, sexual intercourse of any kind, or any activity, which could be perceived by others as seductive or harassing.

- Volunteers are prohibited from socializing with residents outside of a professional relationship or in a manner that is unrelated to program goals. This includes, but is not limited to, taking residents to personal or family events or to the volunteer's home.
- Volunteers are never to receive services from or perform services for a resident regardless of whether there is a payment or gratuity given for the service.
- Volunteers are prohibited from using equipment or supplies that are meant for residents.
- Volunteers are to be extremely conscious of treating all residents the same. All rules and policies are to be enforced consistently and fairly. Volunteers are to avoid all behavior that could be construed as favoritism.
- Volunteers are to avoid influencing residents to carry out a course of action unless there is clear and specific threat to basic survival or danger of loss of freedom. Volunteers are prohibited from entering into any decision-making roles with or for residents, including, but not limited to, guardianship, power of attorney, and representative payee.

### ***Gift/Money Policy***

- Volunteers are not to give or accept cash or any items (over a \$5 value) meant as a gift from a resident.
- Volunteers are not to engage in borrowing money or other items from residents.
- Volunteers are prohibited from giving or loaning money directly to residents.
- Volunteers are never to hold cash or other valuables for a resident.
- Volunteers are never to receive or perform services for a resident in exchange for money or any gift or gratuity.

### ***Absenteeism***

Volunteers play an important part of the work of Tender Mercies, and the agency has grown to depend on volunteers to achieve its mission. When committing to a project or role, volunteers and volunteer groups should work with the *Volunteer Coordinator* to create a schedule that works well for both the volunteers and the agency. Volunteers should notify the *Volunteer Coordinator* (513-639-7027), in advance, if they are unable to be present on their scheduled day. Prolonged or repeated absences may result in a volunteer or group being removed from a project or assignment.

### ***Grievance Procedure***

The Volunteer Services Department operates via an open-door policy. Volunteers who have questions, concerns, or grievances in the course of their work are encouraged to communicate directly with the *Volunteer Coordinator*. The *Volunteer Coordinator* will make a concerted effort to address concerns quickly and effectively.

### ***Discontinuation***

Volunteers and Tender Mercies both reserve the right to discontinue voluntary service at any time for any reason. Volunteers wishing to discontinue their service should contact the *Volunteer Coordinator*.

### ***Media Contact***

Unless explicitly discussed with and approved by the CEO, volunteers should not speak on behalf of Tender Mercies to media outlets. If volunteers do associate themselves with or speak about their experiences with Tender Mercies on public platforms, volunteers are expected to represent Tender Mercies in a respectful and appropriate manner.

### ***Social Media***

Blogs, social networks, and websites are exciting channels for individuals to share knowledge, express creativity, and connect with others who share their interests. Volunteers may not speak for or appear to speak for Tender Mercies without prior approval from the CEO. Only staff authorized by the CEO may speak for, or appear to speak for, Tender Mercies.

### ***Weapons***

Tender Mercies prohibits all persons who enter its property from carrying a handgun, weapon, or explosive of any kind onto the premises. This policy applies *regardless of whether or not an individual is licensed to carry a concealed weapon*. Police officers are the only exception to this policy.

### ***Alcohol/drugs***

The use, abuse, purchase, transfer, sale, manufacture, or trade of illegal drugs or the misuse of prescription drugs is strictly forbidden on Tender Mercies property or when participating in Tender Mercies activities. During events where alcohol is served, volunteers may not consume alcohol during their shift. Inebriated volunteers will not be allowed to finish their shift and may be barred from further service.

### ***Smoking***

In order to provide and maintain a safe and healthy environment, smoking is prohibited in all Tender Mercies indoor areas. Smoking is also prohibited in all Tender Mercies vehicles.

Smoking is permitted in the following designated smoking areas:

- Harkavy Hall patio
- Dana patio
- Employee entrance behind Haven Hall

### ***Anti-Discrimination & Harassment Policy***

Tender Mercies abides by all applicable laws prohibiting discrimination on account sex, age, gender, sexual orientation, gender expression and identity, marital status, disability, religion, race, color, ethnicity, national origin, Appalachian regional ancestry, veteran status, military status, genetic history, HIV status, natural hair type/styles associated with race, or any other category protected under federal, state, and local laws.

Harassment of any person because on account sex, age, gender, sexual orientation, gender expression and identity, marital status, disability, religion, race, color, ethnicity, national origin, Appalachian regional ancestry, veteran status, military status, genetic history, HIV status, natural hair type/styles associated with race, or any other category protected under federal, state and local laws is strictly prohibited, whether directed at an employee, resident, volunteer, vendor, donor, or consultant. Any such harassment is prohibited by this policy whether or not it also violates the equal employment opportunity laws.



Sexual harassment constitutes discrimination and is illegal under federal, state, and local laws. Sexual harassment is defined in the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission Guidelines as unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature when, for example: (i) submission to such conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly as a term or condition of an individual's employment; ii) submission to or rejection of such conduct by an individual is used as the basis for employment decisions affecting such individual; or (iii) such conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's work performance or creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive working environment.

Sexual harassment may include a range of subtle and not so subtle behaviors and may involve individuals of the same or different gender. These behaviors may include but are not limited to: unwanted sexual advances or requests for sexual favors, sexual jokes and innuendo, verbal abuse of a sexual nature, commentary about an individual's body, sexual prowess or sexual deficiencies, leering, catcalls or touching, obscene comments or gestures, display or circulation in the workplace of sexually suggestive objects or pictures (including through e-mail), and other physical, verbal or visual conduct of a sexual nature. Sex-based harassment that is harassment not involving sexual activity or language may also constitute discrimination if it is severe or pervasive and directed at employees because of their sex.

Harassment on the basis of any other protected characteristic is also strictly prohibited. Under this policy, harassment is verbal or physical conduct that denigrates or shows hostility or aversion toward an individual because of his/her race, color, religion, national origin, age, disability, or any other characteristic protected by law and that: (i) has the purpose or effect of creating an intimidating, hostile or offensive work environment; (ii) has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's work performance; or (iii) otherwise adversely affects an individual's employment opportunities.

Harassing conduct includes, but is not limited to epithets, slurs or negative stereotyping, threatening, intimidating or hostile acts, denigrating jokes, and display or circulation in the workplace of written or graphic material that denigrates or shows hostility or aversion toward an individual or group.

### ***Dress Code***

Tender Mercies volunteers are representatives of our agency when they are volunteering. Therefore, volunteers should dress appropriately and maintain a neat and clean appearance while participating in Tender Mercies activities. When participating in cleaning, landscaping, and/or painting projects, volunteers should wear task-appropriate clothing and footwear.

### ***Confidentiality***

Tender Mercies is committed to fully ensuring that volunteers understand and are aware of confidentiality:

- Volunteers are expected to hold in confidence all verbal and written information obtained from and about residents and control access by others to this information within parameters outlined by the law and agency policy.
- Volunteers must complete legally mandated reporting regarding abuse, duty to warn, and any other legal or regulatory requirements.

- Communication about residents is to be on a “need to know” basis with other volunteer and agency staff.
- All written records with resident-related information are private and confidential. Confidential communication (anything that contains identifying information about residents) is not to be placed on bulletin boards or in any location that can be viewed by the general public.
- Release of information must be obtained prior to giving out information about a resident. Requests for information are to be addressed by the *Volunteer Coordinator*, except in emergency situations.
- Volunteers are never to discuss any information about a resident with other residents.
- Volunteers should use good judgement when sharing personal information about themselves or other volunteers with residents. This includes, but is not limited to, information about where the volunteer lives, how to contact the volunteer outside of work, information about volunteer’s family, or any personal problems of the volunteer.
- Volunteers with access to computers are required to comply with all rules and procedures pertaining to computer access.

***Conflict of Interest***

Tender Mercies prohibits volunteers from engaging in any proprietary or financial activity or practice in conflict with the interests and objectives of the agency. Involvement in any agency decisions or actions that would enhance the financial position of any volunteer is prohibited.

***Proselytizing & Partisanship***

Tender Mercies acknowledges the rights of all volunteers to their own system of religious or political beliefs. Volunteers should show respect for other systems of belief but are to refrain from unsolicited discussion with residents of personal belief systems, including political, religious/spiritual or ideological beliefs. Such discussions can be construed as attempts to impose belief systems on residents.

Tender Mercies acknowledges that many of its volunteers originate from churches, civic groups, and high schools. Volunteers should seek resident permission before engaging in a discussion of personal belief systems, including religious/spiritual or ideological beliefs. Under no circumstances should a Tender Mercies resident be refused a meal, recreational activity, donation, or any other volunteer-related good or service due to differing ideological beliefs.

Volunteers must never present partisan information (supporting or endorsing political parties or candidates for office) in accordance with our organization’s 501(c)(3) status.

***Reimbursement of Expenses***

Tender Mercies and the *Volunteer Coordinator* will make a concerted effort to arrange for materials needed by volunteers to be supplied by the agency or donated. Unless otherwise discussed with the *Volunteer Coordinator*, volunteers should not make purchases on behalf of the agency with the expectation of reimbursement.

Tender Mercies has an In-Kind Donation form that can be obtained for tax purposes from the *Volunteer Coordinator*.

***Whistleblower Policy***

Tender Mercies leadership is fully committed and dedicated to the highest standards of business and personal ethics with the need to prevent and detect fraud, fiscal mismanagement, misappropriation of funds, and to ensure ongoing monitoring and conformance with all legal and regulatory requirements. Tender Mercies Whistleblower Policy is intended to encourage and enable employees, volunteers, and others to raise serious concerns within Tender Mercies prior to seeking resolution outside of Tender Mercies. It is the responsibility of all directors, officers, employees, and volunteers to report concerns of any possible impropriety, fraud, fiscal mismanagement, and misappropriation of funds.

It is contrary to the values of Tender Mercies for anyone to retaliate against any board member, officer, employee, or volunteer, who in good faith reports a violation of impropriety, fraudulent, or dishonest use or misuse of agency resources or property.

Tender Mercies has an open-door policy and suggests that volunteers share their questions and concerns with the *Volunteer Coordinator*. If you are not comfortable speaking with the *Volunteer Coordinator* or you are not satisfied with his/her response, you are encouraged to escalate your concern to the Chief Operating Officer or the Chief Executive Officer.

## **Safety and Liability**

### ***Safety***

The safety of volunteers is of utmost important to Tender Mercies. Every effort will be made to keep volunteers safe as they perform their assignments or tasks. Volunteers are also asked to bear their own safety in mind and the safety of fellow volunteers. Volunteers should perform their tasks safely, pay attention to the proper handling of tools and equipment, and speak to the *Volunteer Coordinator* about safety concerns.

### ***Legal Liability***

The scope of Ohio's Volunteer Protection Law is expanded by the definitions contained therein. For example, "volunteer" means an officer, trustee or other person performing uncompensated services for a charitable organization. "Charitable organization" means any charitable nonprofit organization pursuant to Chapter 1702 or any charitable association, group, institution, or society that is not organized and not operated for profit and includes entities "organized and operated for education-related purposes." The Ohio statute provides protection in three instances. First, reminiscent of Maryland's law, it provides for vicarious liability only for actions that the volunteer approved, authorized, participated in or ratified. Second, a volunteer is not liable in a civil action for damages for injury, death or loss to persons or property as a result of the volunteer's own actions or omissions in connection with any supervisory or corporate services performed for the charitable organization, unless: the volunteer approved, authorized, participated in or ratified the act or omission of another; or an act or omission of the volunteer constituted negligence, willful or wanton misconduct or intentionally tortious conduct. Finally, with respect to nonsupervisory or non-corporate services performed for the charitable organization, a volunteer is not liable unless: the volunteer approved, authorized, participated in or ratified; or the act or omission constitutes willful or wanton misconduct or intentionally tortious conduct.



## **Volunteer Confidentiality Agreement, Certification, Acknowledgment, and Release of Liability**

I, the undersigned, hereby agree to the following:

- My role is as a volunteer, and, as such, I will receive no financial reimbursement for services rendered.
- I have been made aware of the assigned duties.
- I will bring to the attention of Tender Mercies any information or questions that arise of a legal nature.
- I recognize that any and all information shared with me as part of my duties as a volunteer, including information about residents, is confidential and shall not be divulged to unauthorized individuals, agencies, or organizations.
- I will not copy, transcribe, record, photograph, or memorize confidential information in any manner, nor disclose or use such information for any purpose other than for the limited purpose of providing the assigned services at Tender Mercies, Inc.
- I certify that, to the best of my knowledge, for a period of no less than 14 days prior to volunteer activity, neither I nor any one in my household was diagnosed with COVID-19, was under a quarantine order for COVID-19, has been in close contact with a person with COVID-19, or has exhibited symptoms consistent with COVID-19 (e.g., fever, dry cough, or shortness of breath).
- I acknowledge that I am undertaking this volunteer activity with knowledge of the risks involved and agree to accept and assume all risks of illness, death, or other exposure, including, but not limited to, exposure to COVID-19, whether caused by the negligence of Tender Mercies or otherwise.
- I, on behalf of myself and my heirs, expressly waive and release any and all claims, now hereafter known or discovered, against Tender Mercies, and its officers, directors, managers, employees, agents, representatives, affiliates, members, successors, and assigns (collectively, "Releasees"), related to illness, death, or other injury caused by, attributable to, or relating to arising out of or attributable in any way to my volunteer activities, no matter if they arise out of the negligence of Tender Mercies, any of the Releasees, or otherwise. I covenant not to make or bring any claim against Tender Mercies or any other Releasees.
- I acknowledge that I have read all the terms in the Tender Mercies Volunteer Handbook and understand my rights to access the Volunteer Handbook online at any time at: <https://www.tendermerciesinc.org/volunteer>

I have had the opportunity to read and understand the release and acknowledge that by signing the document, I am waiving certain legal rights in the event of injury.

BY SIGNING BELOW, I accept and agree to the terms contained above.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

## Notes