

Adult Program

Volunteer Policy & Procedure Handbook



Independence
Place

128 North Chalkville Road • Trussville, AL 35173

205-228-0284 • www.independenceplaceofalabama.org

Introduction

Welcome to the Independence Place Program! We appreciate and value your contribution of time, talent, energy, and enthusiasm to help us create a wonderful environment and programming to connect our adult participants with exceptional needs to their community in a meaningful way. The purpose of this handbook is to guide you in your volunteer experience with us. While the content is intended to inform you of your responsibilities as a volunteer, it is also intended as a reference to be utilized at your convenience should you have any questions during your volunteer service with Independence Place.

Our Mission

Independence Place provides programming to meet the social and recreational needs of adult individuals with cognitive disabilities in a way that allows them to experience a life full of purpose and celebration.

About Us

Independence Place:

- Provides quality programming Monday through Thursday 8:00 A.M. – 5:00 P.M.
- Provides recreational, leisure, and social opportunities for adults with cognitive disabilities
- Is a privately funded nonprofit (501(c)3) organization
- Puts participant safety and satisfaction first
- Values individuals as unique, capable, and successful members of their community

Volunteer Rights and Responsibilities

As a volunteer, you are a valuable resource to this organization, its staff and its participants.

Volunteers shall be extended the right:

- To be given meaningful assignments
- To be sufficiently training and oriented for the position assigned
- To be treated fairly and equally
- To be effectively supervised
- To have full involvement and participation
- To be appropriately recognized for your time and service
- To terminate your volunteer agreement for any reason at any time by giving notice to the appropriate staff

In return, the volunteer shall agree:

- To complete all appropriate training for your specific assignment
- To actively perform your duty to the best of your ability
- To adhere to the guidelines in this handbook
- To honor your time and time commitment to Independence Place or to provide adequate notice when unable to do so
- To remain loyal to the mission and policies of Independence Place
- To use your best judgment in situations not explicitly addressed by Independence Place

As a volunteer, you should expect:

- Further training upon request
- Feedback of your performance
- Consistent support and encouragement
- To be asked for an evaluation of your overall experience at Independence Place

Volunteer Guidelines

Sign In / Sign Out

You will be required to sign in and out with the Program Director upon arrival and departure from Independence Place. This helps us accurately keep track of how many hours of time you have donated to us, which is extremely valuable information to us as a nonprofit organization. A sign in/out book will be located at the Director station on campus.

Name Badge

Please wear your visitor/volunteer name badge issued to you while working with participants of Independence Place on campus or in the community.

Attendance / Timeliness

We count on your punctual attendance. We value your time commitment, and also realize we all have other obligations and abrupt changes in our schedules from time to time. If you expect you will be tardy or cannot attend your volunteer appointment, please contact the Program Director with as much lead time as possible and leave a message. If you know 24 hours in advance, please contact the Volunteer Coordinator. Consistent or frequent absenteeism or tardiness may result in volunteer dismissal.

Disability Etiquette

Please use “people first” language when discussing a person with a disability to maintain a positive and encouraging attitude for our environment. A training chart is provided at the end of this handbook to help. For other questions concerning appropriate language or disability etiquette, please specifically ask the Director or Volunteer Coordinator.

Illness

If you suspect you may be ill or feel ill at any point before or during your volunteer appointment, please let the Program Director know as soon as possible. We need to maintain a healthy environment for the safety of our participants to the best of our ability.

Breaks and Phone Use

We encourage our volunteers to take breaks when necessary. Please arrange breaks through the Program Director. Help us maintain a focused environment by turning your phone off or on vibrate upon arrival, and refrain from using it during your volunteer appointment. If you are expecting an important message via telephone, please let the Program Director know before you start your appointment. If you need to use your phone while at Independence Place, please go to a non-public area to avoid disturbing others.

Lunch/Snacks

We do not currently have a kitchen on site. We will have a lunch area with a refrigerator and microwave. Lunch is not provided for participants, volunteers, or staff. If your volunteer duration exceeds a few hours, please remember to bring a lunch, or coordinate a lunch break with the Program Director to leave campus for lunch. Please keep all food and drink in the lunch area.

Guests

Friends or family should never accompany you to your volunteer appointment unless they have been assigned a volunteer position. We love visitors, but please coordinate a tour and/or appointment with the Volunteer Coordinator or Program Director before bringing a guest to Independence Place.

Personal Items

Please ask the Program Director for an appropriate place to store your personal items during your visit. Independence Place is not responsible for items lost or stolen while you are volunteering. Please do not bring valuable items with you to volunteer.

Age requirements

Independence Place wants to engage and inspire volunteerism for everyone interested in helping us connect our participants to their community through quality programming. For safety purposes, our minimum age for junior volunteers is 16 years old. Junior volunteers are required to have signed permission of a parent or legal guardian. Levels of responsibility and variety of duties may increase over time with proven commitment, maturity and responsibility. Specific volunteer opportunities are available for families and children with regards to community events sponsored by Independence Place.

Dress Code

As a representative of Independence Place, we ask that you dress appropriately for your volunteer appointment. You are not only representing yourself to our participants and their families, but also our staff and community partners.

Please adhere to the following guidelines:

- Wear appropriate shoes for the time/ activity of during your volunteer appointment.
- Please do not wear hats or caps in the building.
- Please do not wear midriffs, halters, tank tops, or other revealing garments.
- Skirts, dresses, or shorts should be no shorter than three inches above the knee due to the nature of activities you may be participating in.
- Movement is necessary at Independence Place; please wear appropriate clothes at all times.
- Generally accepted standards of hygiene should be followed.
- Cologne or heavily perfumed items should be avoided due to allergic or scent-sensitive people in the building.
- If you have questions regarding appropriate dress for your assigned time / activity, please speak with the Program Director or Volunteer Coordinator.

Independence Place Policies and Procedures

Tobacco-Free Policy

Independence Place is a tobacco-free campus. Do not use any of tobacco while serving at Independence Place or volunteering during a community outing with clients.

Drugs/Alcohol

When participating in Independence Place program activities, volunteers are prohibited from purchasing, transferring, using, or possessing illicit drugs, alcohol, or prescription drugs in any way that is illegal, in order to provide a safe, healthy, and productive environment for all volunteers and employees. If caught or suspected of breaking this policy, disciplinary actions including termination will result.

Severe Weather

In case of inclement weather, please do not travel to our facilities if you are concerned for your safety. Please call (205) 913-1815 for closing announcements. If the facilities are open and you are unable to meet your volunteer appointment due to the weather, please contact the Program Director as soon as possible. If severe weather occurs during your volunteer appointment, please consult and follow staff to your appropriate shelter area.

Fire / Emergency

The Program Director should lead and instruct you during specific fire/emergency procedures. If the Program Director is not available during such an emergency, please seek guidance from other staff members. Independence Place will have fire drills quarterly to prepare staff, volunteers, and participants for emergency situations. For a complete listing of Independence Place's emergency plans, please contact the Program Director or Volunteer Coordinator.

Grievance Procedure

Volunteers and staff are expected to act professionally and in accordance with their position descriptions. Should a volunteer have a grievance concerning their work environment, they should report it promptly to the Program Director. In the event that the grievance is with the Program Director, please report the issue to the Executive Director. Every effort will be made to achieve speedy and effective resolution, and all complaints will be treated confidentially. (Confidentiality will not be guaranteed for complaints involving sexual harassment or abuse.)

Discontinuation of Volunteer Service/Dismissal

If you wish to leave your volunteer position, please contact the Volunteer Coordinator and Program Director with as much lead time as possible so that appropriate arrangements can be made. As a volunteer, you have the right to terminate your volunteer service for any reason. Independence Place reserves the same right to termination. Failure to abide by Independence Place policies and procedures is grounds for dismissal from the Independence Place volunteer program.

Media Conduct

Please do not represent yourself as a spokesperson or representative for Independence Place under any circumstances. Only the Board President and members, Executive Director, and Program Director serve as media spokespersons for Independence Place.

Harassment/Discrimination

We hope your experience at Independence Place will be pleasant. Harassment is not only illegal; it also creates uncomfortable conditions and unpleasant experience for everyone involved. Independence Place is an equal opportunity workplace and committed to providing an environment that is free of discrimination and unlawful harassment, including sexual harassment. Actions, words, pictures, jokes, or comments based on any individual's sex, race, ethnicity, age, religion, disability, or any other legally protected characteristic will not be tolerated. If you believe you have been the victim of harassment, or know of another employee, volunteer, or participant who has, you should inform the Program Director to reach a solution. If the accusation is in direct relation to the Program Director, the complaint should be made to the Executive Director. In the event allegations of harassment or discrimination are made, a full investigation will be conducted and appropriate action will be taken.

Confidentiality

You may be exposed to sensitive or confidential information during your work as a volunteer with Independence Place. This information is to be kept confidential. If you suspect that confidentiality rights are being violated, please report this to the Program Director. The privacy of the matters of Independence Place is protected by State and Federal laws and regulation and the policies of Independence Place. Please protect the identity or presence of any participant or donor of Independence Place or any part of their personal records. You are not permitted to take personal photographs of Independence Place program participants or their families unless you have been specifically instructed to do so. Any breach of confidentiality policies of Independence Place will result in immediate termination of the volunteer agreement.

Supervision

As a volunteer, you should not be alone with a participant for any reason at any time, nor should you remove a participant from the group area, unless you have previous reasonable authorization from the Program Director to do so.

Transporting Participants

Please do not drive or transport an Independence Place participant at any time. If our volunteer assignment requires you to leave Independence Place campus with participants, please ride the van / bus with the participants and staff. Volunteers are not permitted to drive Independence Place participants under any circumstances.

Safety

Although we do our best to provide safe conditions for our volunteers, we count on volunteers to be the best protector of their own personal safety. Volunteers should pay particular attention to safety instructions and proper equipment use and activity guidelines. Please let it be known to the Program Director if you have a particular safety concern or feel that you are in danger in any way. You must report any injuries to the Program Director immediately before leaving the Independence Place campus. In the case of an injury, please request and complete an injury form to be placed on file with the Program Director.

Firearms

Firearms are not permitted on the Independence Place campus, even with a permit. A firearm would be inappropriate and dangerous in the Independence Place environment. Bringing a firearm on campus during a volunteer assignment will result in immediate termination of volunteer status.

Reimbursement

You will not be asked to purchase any items by Independence Place staff. You will not receive reimbursement for items you independently choose to purchase for Independence Place programs or participants as a volunteer.

Background Checks

All staff members and volunteers will be subject to a background check.

Social Media

Volunteers are not permitted to comment via social media with regards to Independence Place programming, participants, staff, or confidentiality issues. It is never permissible for a volunteer to post a photo of a participant of the Independence Place via social media.

Fundraising

The Independence Place requires you to have express permission from the Executive Director and Board of Directors before raising funds for the Independence Place in any way. You may not fundraise or request donations on behalf of Independence Place without consent to do so. We do appreciate your ideas and suggestions and are happy to consider them when planning upcoming events.

Code of Ethics

We hold ourselves in high regard as professionals and stakeholders in the service delivery system by upholding the highest standards of integrity honesty, confidentiality, and fairness.

- I will respect the privacy of persons served and hold in confidence all information obtained in the course of professional services.
- I will maintain a professional attitude that upholds confidentiality of individuals served, colleagues, applicants, and Independence Place.
- I will not engage in or condone any form of harassment or discrimination.
- I will promote the spirit of and comply will all applicable federal and state laws and regulations pertaining to our service delivery system.
- I will provide supports and services designed to meet the needs of the individual with emphasis on promoting choice, inclusion, socialization, and recreation.
- I will strive to ensure that all services are conducted fairly, with mental understanding of the nature of the services provided, with full disclosure of any potential conflict of interest that may exist with zero tolerance for exploitation of our participants.
- I will refrain from doing anything that might bring discredit to Independence Place.
- I will do my best to assure a climate of loyalty, trust, and mutual respect among the staff, volunteers, and participants of Independence Place.
- I will always be cognizant of the public's perception of my personal and professional actions and the impact my actions would have on Independence Place's reputation in the community and elsewhere.
- I will not borrow from participants or use their personal items for my own use or for the use of others.
- I have total commitment to provide the highest quality of services to those who seek my professional assistance.

Talking about Disabilities

We want to reflect our belief in the potential of the individual in everything we do, including our language. This is a general guide to the “people first” philosophy, which maintains focus on the individual, rather than a disability. We accept that a disability is not their identity but rather a small part of who they are.

SAY	Instead Of
People with disabilities	Handicapped, physically challenged, disabled, diseased
Person with a hearing impairment	Is deaf, the deaf
Adult with intellectual disability	Mentally retarded, mentally ill
Person with seizure disorder	Epileptic
Person with a learning disability	Slow learner
Person with ...paraplegia, paralyzed, spinal cord injury	Paraplegic, quadriplegic
Adult with physical challenges	Crippled
People with visual impairments	Blind, the blind
Student with....autism, autism spectrum disorder	Autistic student or he’s autistic
Typically developing child	Normal child, healthy
Congenital disability	Birth defect
Accessible busses, bathrooms; reserved for people with disabilities	Handicapped busses, handicapped bathrooms
General education or curriculum	Regular education or curriculum
Person who... uses a wheelchair, cane, walker, or assistive technology	Wheelchair bound, confined to a wheelchair
Participant, individual, client	Patient, case
Downs Syndrome	A person with Downs Syndrome

Interacting with people with disabilities

- Treat adults like adults, teenagers like teenagers, and children like children. Bring up age appropriate topics in conversation.
- Allow people with disabilities to maintain their independence; do not act or speak for them. It is acceptable to offer assistance; however, wait until it is accepted before acting.
- Speak directly to the individual, not their interpreter or guardian. Do not hesitate to look them in the eye or be eye level with them to address them during conversation.
- If someone needs you to speak in a louder voice, they will ask. Please do not yell. It does not make them understand you better.
- In order to increase self-confidence, encourage individuals to achieve tasks on their own, unless the individual has asked you for help that is truly needed.
- Every individual has “personal space”. Always be respectful of their personal space and insist that they be respectful of yours.
- Remember a wheelchair, walker, or cane is part of an individual’s “personal space.” Do not lean on equipment or push a wheelchair without the person’s permission. Always offer assistance first before acting, and always let the person know where you are taking them.
- Use the “People First” language and remember that the individual comes first, not the diagnosis.
- Do not be afraid to ask questions if you are unsure of what to do.
- Be patient, flexible, and listen to the individual.
- Treat the individual with the same dignity, respect, and courtesy that you would use with anyone else.
- Imagine yourself in their place. How would you want to be treated?

Important Contact Information

Executive Director – Carrie Jones – (205) 913-1815

Program Director -

Volunteer Coordinator -

Closing Announcements -

Volunteer Release

I agree to release, discharge, indemnify, and hold Independence Place harmless for any and all damages to me or my personal property while performing my volunteer services to Independence Place in a voluntary capacity.

I recognize that while performing my volunteer services in a voluntary capacity, there exist risks of injury including personal physical harm. On behalf of myself, my heirs, personal representatives and executors, I hereby release, discharge, indemnify and hold harmless Independence Place, its agents, servants and employees from any and all claims, causes of action or demands of any nature or cause connected with my Volunteer Agreement.

This might include costs and attorney's fees and court costs incurred by Independence Place in connection with my volunteer services based on damages or injuries which may be incurred or sustained by me in any way. Such damages or injuries might include, but are not limited to accidents, injuries and personal property damage.

I understand that public relations are an important part of volunteering with Independence Place program. I therefore agree on behalf of my heirs, personal representatives and executors to allow the Independence Place to use any photographs taken of me for use in public relations efforts. Independence Place will use reasonable efforts to notify me, but such notification is not a condition of the photograph's release for public relations purposes.

Printed Name

Signature / Date

PARENT OR LEGAL GUARDIAN (OF VOLUNTEERS UNDER 18 YEARS OF AGE)

As a parent or legal guardian of the above named volunteer, I hereby give my consent to allow my child (ward) to volunteer services for Independence Place as described within this volunteer handbook. I have read this volunteer handbook and fully understand its terms and conditions, paying special attention to the release section herein.

Signature of Parent or legal guardian (if child is under the age of 16) Date

Executive Director Signature

Date



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