

City with Dwellings: A Community First Initiative Volunteer Manual

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City with Dwellings: A Community First Initiative works to end the crisis of homelessness in Winston-Salem and Forsyth County, providing a unique platform for volunteers across the community to connect and build relationships with individuals who are experiencing homelessness.

In 2012, community leaders responded to the critical need for winter emergency shelter in Winston-Salem and Forsyth County, mobilizing congregations, community groups and civic organizations to create a multi-site shelter outreach still in operation today. Those early efforts and grassroots advocacy developed and grew into City with Dwellings (CwD), a dynamic organization committed to building community with vulnerable individuals struggling with homelessness, housing insecurity and issues contributing to those circumstances.

CwD engages with the individual experiencing homelessness in order to fully understand the unique needs and circumstances he or she must overcome to successfully access housing, health and employment resources. This person-centered approach builds trust and creates meaningful community with homeless individuals across a diverse network of volunteers, enabling CwD to effectively facilitate a coordinated community response to help house individuals and reduce recidivism.

Mission Statement

City with Dwellings: A Community First Initiative (CwD) works to end the crisis of homelessness in Winston-Salem and Forsyth County by building supportive, sustained community with individuals who are experiencing homelessness. CwD strives to maintain low-barrier entry for all of our programs in order to reach the most vulnerable and marginalized individuals experiencing homelessness.

The activities of City with Dwellings are:

- a. Assisting chronic and non-chronically homeless persons in accessing stable, long-term housing solutions through the Coordinated Intake Center, HAWS, and other resources, consistent with the Housing-First vision of the city's homeless strategies.
- b. Engaging homeless persons through intentional relationships and a unique model of hospitality, continuing to coordinate services and critical mediation by inviting agencies and vulnerable persons into low-barrier, high-accountability work.
- c. Spending purposeful, quality time with homeless persons on goal setting and creating a practical plan of action to meet stated goals.
- d. Building capacity in volunteers, congregations, colleges, hospitals, and businesses to be more actively involved in the goal to end homelessness. Accomplishing this through programs and activities that educate, equip, coordinate, and inspire.
- e. Shifting the conversation about homelessness by providing opportunities for homeless persons and the wider public to connect in order to remove social barriers and humanize the experience of living without housing.

Unifying Principles

City with Dwellings is a community first initiative. Our aim is to develop a safe, healing, and inclusive community for people experiencing homelessness as well as the volunteers and professionals working with them. As such, **all** community members commit to the following:

1. Our Community creates a safe space for all members. This means:
 - a. Possession of alcohol and possession of illegal drugs is prohibited at the Community First Center and Overflow Shelters. Firearms and weapons are not allowed on premises, including but not limited to knives, explosives, and any other chemical whose purpose is to cause harm to another person.

- b. We will speak kindly and respectfully.
 - c. City with Dwellings treats hate speak as an act of violence. As such, we will promptly engage with the actor and attempt to de-escalate the situation. If the issue cannot be resolved, the perpetrator of the hate speech will be asked to leave the program space.
 - d. We will live peacefully. Aggressive behavior and perceived aggression will not be tolerated. We provide programs that help develop skills for peaceful living.
- 2. Our community values everyone that walks in the door. This means:
 - a. We will respect others and ourselves.
 - b. All are welcome. We will not discriminate based on race, gender, housing status, sexual orientation, disability, economic status, religion, or ethnicity.
- 3. Our community commits to be in relationship with each other. This means:
 - a. We will engage with one another. We will participate in conversations with other community members and ask good questions. Let's get to know one another!
 - b. We will participate in community activities. Community members are encouraged to participate in one program each week at the Community First Center and to identify goals to work on with the Case Coordinator.
 - c. We will seek to understand and respect the choices others make as we each walk our own journey and as we journey together within this community.
- 4. Our community is marked by gratitude. This means:
 - a. We will keep our spaces clean at the Community First Center and Overflow Shelters.
 - b. We will keep up with our own belongings. No personal belongings are to be left unattended inside or outside of the Community First Center or Overflow Shelters. Unattended items will be thrown away.
 - c. We will respect the property of others. No graffiti or defacing of property.

The Importance of Community

CwD strives to create community among those experiencing homelessness, those who were formerly homeless, the staff of CwD, and those who volunteer with CwD and/or the Overnight Shelters.

Community integration for individuals who are homeless is a complicated and non-linear process; however research has shown that being part of a community positively impacts an individual's path to self-determination, independence, and empowerment. (Coltman, 2015)

Coltman, L., Gapka, S., Harriott, D., Koo, M., Reid, J., & Zsager, A. (2015). Understanding Community Integration in a Housing-First Approach: Toronto at Home/Chez Soi Community Based Research. *Intersectionalities: A Global Journal Of Social Work Analysis, Research, Polity, And Practice*, 4(2), 39-50. Retrieved from <http://journals.library.mum.ca/ojs/index.php.IJ/article/view/862/1237>

City with Dwellings (CwD) Programs

CwD currently operates four integrated programs focused on building community to end the crisis of homelessness.

Community First Center

CwD Community First Center (CFC) is open year-round and offers open hours, targeted programming, and individual appointments during the week. CFC open hours provide an important portal of entry for individuals who are newly homeless or at risk of becoming homeless.

The Community First Center is a place of welcome, radical hospitality, and progress. Volunteers and staff are able to build a deeper level of trust with guests and a stronger sense of community with each

other, allowing us to understand the unique circumstances and stressors each guest faces on a daily basis.

Volunteers and staff provide both group and one-on-one support to help guests navigate the complex system of housing resources, as well as accomplish activities necessary for daily independent living. CwD attempts to care for the whole person in a low-barrier, consistent, and community-building environment.

Overflow Shelters

City with Dwellings operates a Winter Emergency Overflow Shelter, which partners with local congregations to provide shelter to as many as 90 men and women each night from December 1 through March 31. CwD provides a central check-in space and process nightly, assigning individual guests to one of the Overflow Shelter sites and providing transportation to the site. CwD also provides a paid staff monitor each night at each of the Overflow Shelter sites.

Overflow Shelter sites are hosted by local churches and provide dinner for guests, a safe and welcoming space for guests to spend the night, and the opportunity to be in community with other guests and the volunteers.

HEARRT

The Housing, Emergency Assistance, Rapid Response Team (HEARRT) is a joint initiative between City with Dwellings, Wake Forest Baptist Medical Center's Empowerment Project and the United Way's Housing Matter's Initiative. The HEARRT approach combines housing with consistent, supportive services and resources as an immediate intervention for highly vulnerable and chronically homeless persons in our community.

The HEARRT team has four apartments, conveniently located so residents have access to grocery stores, medical care and other services. The first resident moved in June 28, 2019. City with Dwellings employs a peer support specialist who lives on-site to provide 24-hour assistance to people living in the HEARRT units. He will also partner with the case managers from the Empowerment Project to provide intensive case management to support residents as they work towards stability in their housing and health. The Team will connect residents to needed services such as mental and physical health care, transportation to food pantries and clothing closets, as well as opportunities for engagement in the community.

Street Outreach

Street Outreach, led by the CwD staff Case Coordinator and with the support of highly trained volunteers, is a growing area of our work with individuals experiencing homelessness. This focus enables CwD to "meet people where they are" as individuals make progress and experience setbacks related to housing and health goals.

Volunteer Opportunities

CwD relies heavily on volunteers to provide services and accomplish the mission of ending homelessness in Winston-Salem and Forsyth County.

To volunteer at the Community First Center, an individual must attend a volunteer orientation. Volunteers at the individual Overflow Shelters will receive training on-site on the night they volunteer.

The following volunteer opportunities are explained in the Appendix with applicable qualifications for each.

- Community First Center: Hospitality and Engagement

- Community First Center: Mail and Support
- Community First Center: Program Volunteer
- Community First Center: Information Navigator
- Overflow Shelter: Central Check-in Hospitality/Registration
- Overflow Shelters: Check-in Volunteer (site specific)
- Overflow Shelters: Provide Dinner (site specific)
- Overflow Shelters: Overnight Volunteer (site specific)
- Overflow Shelters: Provide To-Go Bags (site specific)
- Provide a Welcome Home Box
- Furnish a HEART Apartment
- Community Coordinator

Volunteer accountabilities

City with Dwellings' approach to working with vulnerable individuals experiencing homelessness is based on a model of sustained, supportive community with the values of welcome, mercy, compassion, and advocacy informing everything we do. We believe in the inherent worth of every person and honor the time that staff and volunteers spend building relationships and trust with persons struggling with homelessness.

The transformative relationships built through City with Dwellings positively impacts volunteers, who gain a better understanding of vulnerable populations and the challenges homeless individuals must overcome. Our work is highly participatory and consistent with restorative practices. We believe it is more effective to work with and alongside individuals rather than doing things for them. These restorative practices strengthen relations between individuals as well as social connections within communities. Developing relationships of trust and engaging the wider community in our work enables City with Dwellings to effectively facilitate a coordinated community response to help house individuals and reduce recidivism.

All volunteers are asked to support the CwD model and values. All volunteers under 18 years of age must be accompanied by an accountable adult. Additional volunteer accountabilities include:

Confidentiality

CwD treats information given to us by program participants as confidential information, sharing it outside of CwD only with the direct permission of the program participant. Volunteers can share a program participant's confidential information with a CwD staff person to further the work of the organization and to provide a safe and welcoming environment within our community. Volunteers are to refrain from discussing any information regarding program participants except in the nature of their volunteer duties with CwD staff and other service providers. Volunteers are asked to refrain from acknowledging that an individual is a CwD program participant to persons outside of the CwD community.

Accountability for being present and completing accepted tasks

It is very important that volunteers honor their agreed upon assignment and commitment of time. If volunteers are unable to perform the duties they signed up for, they should notify CwD staff or Overflow Shelter lead volunteers as soon as possible. In the case of bad weather, CwD staff will notify volunteers if activities have been cancelled.

Incident reporting

CwD has an incident reporting process for communicating instances in which program participants or volunteers may have been injured or have been injured. Volunteers at the Community First Center are asked to report any incidents to staff at CFC at the time of the incident. Volunteers at an Overflow Shelter are asked to report incidents to the staff overnight monitor on the night of the incident.

Transportation

CwD will not ask volunteers to transport program participants using the volunteer's personal vehicle. CwD has insured drivers to transport program participants in CwD-owned vehicles. If a volunteer transports program participants in the volunteer's personal vehicle, the volunteer assumes all related risks and responsibilities.

Computer Usage

All electronic and telephonic communications systems, and all communications and information transmitted by, received from, or stored in these systems are the property of CwD. As such, these systems are to be used for job-related purposes. Improper use of the internet and/or email systems will not be tolerated.

Volunteers are cautioned that they should have no expectation of privacy while using CwD equipment or facilities for any purpose.

Social Networking

Unless specifically instructed, volunteers are not authorized and therefore restricted to speak on behalf of CwD. Volunteers are expected to protect the privacy of CwD employees and program participants and are prohibited from disclosing personal employee and nonemployee information to which volunteers have access.

Volunteers are cautioned that they should have no expectation of privacy while using the internet. Postings can be reviewed by anyone, including CwD.

Volunteers may not post or share photos of any guests or other volunteers without the explicit approval of all guests and volunteers in the photo.

Maintaining healthy boundaries

Volunteers are encouraged to:

- Follow through and complete accepted tasks. The best way to build trust with others is to do what you said you would do.
- Follow the CwD Unifying Principles.
- Hold all community members to their commitment to follow the CwD Unifying Principles.
- Remember that CwD is a low barrier community, working with the most vulnerable individuals who are experiencing homelessness.
- Not give money or gifts to guests.
- Be attentive to and really listen to program participants.
- Engage in open and honest conversation with program participants.
- Ask for a copy of the CwD Education and Resources for Volunteers if you want to increase your understanding of the issues, terminology, and resources available to those who are experiencing homelessness.

Volunteers are prohibited from:

- Receiving gifts from guests or a member of a guest's family.
- Pursuing romantic or sexual relationships with guests.

Appendix: Volunteer Position Descriptions

Community First Center: Hospitality and Engagement

Assist staff with the set-up, clean-up and execution of activities for participants experiencing homelessness at the Community First Center. Activities are focused on providing hospitality, building relationships with participants by engaging in conversation with our guests and getting to know them individually, and supporting any therapeutic programming that occurs. Work one-on-one or in small groups to encourage participation, engagement, and building of community.

This position assists with set-up and tear-down each day, beginning 30 minutes before opening and ending about 30 minutes after closing.

To volunteer at the Community First Center, an individual must attend volunteer orientation.

Qualifications:

- Caring individual
- Ability to convey empathy
- Effective communicator who can ask questions and actively listens
- Ability to interact with diverse array of program participants
- Ability to engage in one-to-one conversations with program participants
- Ability to discern when an issue requires involving CwD staff

Staff Supervisor: Program Director

Community First Center: Mail and Support

Assist program participants in receiving their mail and/or with operating computers at the Community First Center. Activities are focused on providing hospitality, building relationships with participants by engaging in conversation with our guests and getting to know them individually. Work one-on-one to encourage participation, engagement, and building of community.

To volunteer at the Community First Center, an individual must attend volunteer orientation.

Qualifications:

- Caring individual
- Ability to interact with diverse array of program participants
- Ability to engage in one-to-one conversations with program participants
- Ability to discern when an issue requires involving CwD staff

Staff Supervisor: Program Director

Community First Center: Program Volunteer

Assist Program Leader and engage with guests as all participate together in the day's activity at the Community First Center. Examples of programs: Life Management, Dealing with Anger, Dealing with Stress, art therapy, horticulture therapy, and many more. Work one-on-one or in small groups to encourage participation, engagement, and building of community.

To volunteer at the Community First Center, an individual must attend volunteer orientation.

Qualifications:

- Caring individual
- Ability to interact with diverse array of program participants

- Ability to engage in one-to-one conversations with program participants
- Ability to discern when an issue requires involving CwD staff

Staff Supervisor: Program Director

Community First Center: Information Navigator

Assist program participants at the Community First Center obtain information they may need. Activities are focused on researching a phone number or address, downloading applications for employment, helping with mail and/or change of address--and all kinds of things! CFC has an easily identifiable information area for this role with access to a computer and staff, if needed. Work one-on-one to solve information requests from program participants.

To volunteer at the Community First Center, an individual must attend volunteer orientation.

Qualifications:

- Caring individual
- Good listener
- Enjoy research and problem-solving
- Ability to interact with diverse array of program participants
- Ability to discern when an issue requires involving CwD staff

Staff Supervisor: Program Director

Overflow Shelter: Central Check-in Hospitality/Registration

Share hospitality with our shelter guests as they check in for the night and await transportation to an overflow shelter. Activities focus on assisting with the check-in process, serving hot cocoa & cookies, and sharing a conversation with guests as they wait for check-in and transportation to their site each night.

Qualifications:

- Caring individual
- Ability to interact with diverse array of program participants
- Ability to engage in one-to-one conversations with guests
- Ability to discern when an issue requires involving CwD staff

Staff Supervisor: CwD Staff who is managing Central Check-in for the evening

Overflow Shelters: Check-in Volunteer (site specific)

Prepare the space by laying out mats and pulling bins; provide welcome when guests arrive; assist with the check-in process by helping guests locate their bins and exchange their personal effects for bedding; engage with our guests over their dinner; and provide extra eyes and hands to help the night go smoothly. Note: while some bins are heavy, we can accommodate adult volunteers of all abilities for this role.

Minimum age for volunteering is 18.

Volunteers at the individual Overflow Shelters will receive training on-site on the night they volunteer.

Qualifications:

- Caring individual
- Ability to interact with diverse array of guests

Staff Supervisors: Church Site Coordinator and CwD Overflow Shelter Monitor

Overflow Shelters: Provide Dinner (site specific)

Provide our guests a hot meal in an atmosphere of hospitality. Dinner volunteers bring an entree and side dishes (dessert is optional, but very much appreciated). Please arrive with food fully prepared at the proper time. Please provide plates, napkins, cups, utensils, and anything needed for serving. Specifics for each site (number of guests to provide for, whether bottled water is needed) are communicated at the sign-up for each site. Dinner volunteers will serve/plate the meal for our guests, and will help to clean up after dinner.

This task is more fun and affordable when a team works together, however only one contact person is needed to sign up for the group of no more than 6. This will be the person who receives the reminder e-mail, which will include meal guidelines/suggestions.

Protein is critical for our guests' diet, so please make sure that any meatless entree contains an alternate form of protein. Firm fruits or vegetables may be hard on teeth that receive little or no dental care.

Minimum age for volunteering is 18. Meal preparation off-site is an excellent way to involve youth in this ministry.

Qualifications:

- Good cook or ability to procure good food!
- Ability to interact with diverse array of guests

Staff Supervisors: Church Site Coordinator

Overflow Shelters: Overnight Volunteer (site specific)

Two Overnight volunteers will alternate "shifts" working with the City with Dwellings' staff/monitor, who will remain awake through the night. Training is provided each night. Most nights are calm and quiet (except for the snoring!). Please arrive at the proper shelter site at the time listed, prepared to remain onsite through the entire night. You can use the WiFi or read during your shift; coffee is available on site. Please bring a sleeping bag/blanket and a pillow to use. Overnight volunteers will be provided a separate room to sleep in and to store their gear. The monitor will ask for your assistance if needed.

Minimum age for volunteering is 18.

Volunteers at the individual Overflow Shelters will receive training on-site on the night they volunteer.

Qualifications:

- Caring individual
- Ability to interact with diverse array of guests

Staff Supervisor: CwD Overflow Shelter Monitor

Overflow Shelters: Provide To-Go Bags (site specific)

Provide meal replacement "To Go" bags for guests to take with them as they leave in the morning. Contents should include any required utensils and be packed in a gallon plastic bag or paper lunch bag. Suggestions: sandwiches that will not spoil if unrefrigerated for several hours, soft fruit, chewy granola bar, cheese crackers, applesauce or fruit cup, bottle of water. Please remember that many of our guests may have difficulty with hard fruits and crunchy granola bars. Meal preparation off-site is an excellent way to involve youth in this ministry. Number of bags needed differs per site.

Qualification:

- Ability to provide meal replacement to-go bags to an overflow shelter site in advance

Contact: Church Site Contact

Provide a Welcome Home Box

Provide “Welcome Home” boxes to newly housed program participants. Box ingredients are specified and include household cleaning and supplies, as well as personal hygiene items. This is a great opportunity for circles, Sunday School classes, Bible study groups, or businesses to provide contents for the boxes.

Qualifications:

- Ability to provide items needed for Welcome Home boxes

Staff Supervisor: CwD Case Coordinator

Furnish a HEARRT Apartment

Furnish an apartment for a newly housed program participant. Contents needed are basic items for a small apartment. Specifics will be determined case by case. This is a great opportunity for churches, circles, Sunday School classes, Bible study groups, or businesses to provide furniture, linens, dishes and utensils, and starter pantry items.

Qualifications:

- Ability to provide items needed to furnish a small apartment

Staff Supervisor: HEARRT Peer Support Specialist

Community Coordinator

Gather information about a program participant’s needs by motivational interviewing and active listening. Work with CwD Case Coordinator and the program participant to assess and prioritize needs. Build a trusting relationship with the program participant. Assist a program participant in setting and meeting personal goals, including obtaining housing. Help the program participant to identify and maintain support networks. Walk beside the program participant, encouraging the participant to meet personal goals and take on more responsibility for their own future.

Community Coordinator volunteers must be 18 years old and will be identified and recruited by the CwD Case Coordinator.

Qualifications:

- Caring individual
- Ability to convey empathy
- Effective communicator who asks appropriate questions and actively listens
- Ability to engage in one-to-one conversations with a program participant
- Willingness to be trained in processes and challenges in helping program participants navigate various community processes and resources
- Ability to work well with established community case workers and others who work together to meet the needs of program participants
- Ability to discern when an issue requires involving CwD staff

Staff Supervisor: CwD Case Coordinator