

VOLUNTEERING FOR HOOP updated 04-22-2010

Helping Our Own People, Inc., a 501 (c)(3) all-volunteer public charity

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Mission: to provide basic necessities to those living on the streets of Indianapolis to survive another night with no strings attached, no questions asked, unconditional giving.

We welcome you as a volunteer with HOOP!

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HOOP GUIDELINES

1. About HOOP.

- a. HOOP is a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt public charity organization and incorporated in the State of Indiana as a Public Benefit Corporation.
- b. The Board of Directors (BOD) of HOOP is responsible for the guidelines and overall operating decisions of HOOP.
- c. The safety of our volunteers is our first priority, but equally important is our intent to provide protection from any possible liability issue. The guidelines presented below are designed to provide that protection and to provide for smooth, consistent operation on a daily basis. Disregarding HOOP guidelines could lead to the permanent removal of the offending individual(s) from participation as a HOOP volunteer.

2. Basic Volunteer Information.

- a. All volunteers must sign a liability release form, and those who go on outings must be at least 18 years old.
- b. Volunteers must read, understand, and agree to follow the rules and guidelines.
- c. If a volunteer needs to cancel his/her attendance at an outing, he/she must inform the Scheduler and the Outing Leader. **Volunteers needing to cancel their attendance at an outing should alert the Outing Leader as soon as possible. Last minute (or no notice) volunteer cancellations could place the Outing in a tenuous position forcing the leader to cancel the entire outing and costing HOOP money.**
- d. Drivers must carry current, state-required auto insurance and have a valid driver's license.
- e. All new volunteers must complete an orientation/training session with a Training Leader before or during their first outing.
- f. All volunteers must provide emergency contact information that will be kept on file and used only on an as-needed basis.
- g. All information collected by HOOP is kept confidential.
- h. Meetings open to all volunteers will be scheduled throughout the year at times and locations that will be announced. Attendance is not mandatory, but this is an excellent way for volunteers to keep up on what is going on, meet each other, and to voice their thoughts or concerns. Social get-togethers are also held throughout the year.
- i. Suggestions from the volunteers will be discussed at the volunteer meetings, but the final decision on making changes based on these suggestions will be determined by the BOD.

3. Scheduling and Attendance.

- a. A minimum of three people must go on all outings – a trained team leader and 2 other volunteers– for any outing to take place.
- b. Never show up for an outing without being scheduled by or without prior approval from the team leader.
- c. Never bring a new untrained person along without the approval of the leader. All new persons must go through training. (See 2.e. above)
- d. Scheduling for outings is done by the Scheduler. Depending upon the pool of volunteers, it will be necessary for regular volunteers to sometimes go on outings only twice a month (on a regular night). This is to make room to use the incoming new volunteers and give them a chance to go on outings. Taking on new volunteers is necessary for HOOP to grow, to increase the number of nights we can go out, and to prevent "burn out" of the experienced volunteers we have. The schedule for each volunteer is assigned based on his/her availability.
- e. Arrive promptly at the designated meeting time and location in order to assist with the loading of the vehicles. Volunteers should also plan on staying a few minutes after the outing to assist with unloading the

vehicles and returning unused items to their proper locations in the storage unit. If you must quit earlier in the night than the rest of the group, please let the leader know, and you can be taken back to your car. If that leaves only two volunteers, then the outing is over for the night. No one should be responsible for loading or unloading the supplies by themselves in part for safety reasons. If there's left over perishable food at the end of the evening, the entire group should go together to drop it off at Wheeler, again this is a safety issue.

- f. Make sure the leader knows in advance everything you are bringing.

4. Storage Unit Etiquette.

- a. We currently have two storage units at Public Storage on 9th Street and Illinois. One unit, 3220 is climate controlled, containing food, hygiene products, socks and underwear, the other, 2269, is used to other clothing and blankets, etc. Keys and codes required for access will be provided to volunteers on an as-needed basis.
- b. Any donations taken to the storage units should already be sorted, marked, and placed in the proper location. Do not put bags of unsorted or unmarked items in either unit. A list of what was donated should be turned into Board Secretary for our required bookkeeping.
- c. Always leave the storage units as neat, clean, and orderly as possible – leave items in the locations marked on the shelves. Remove all trash from the unit at the end of an outing.
- d. Never store any opened or prepared food (boiled eggs, sandwiches, etc.) or anything that may attract insects. Any food at the storage unit must be in sealed packaging. This unit is inspected by the Marion County Board of Health (MCBOH) annually.
- d. Do not leave fruit in the storage units.
- e. Do not distribute any food/supplies in the Public Storage unit parking lot to homeless people. If they should come up to you, ask them where you can find them in 30 minutes, and tell them we are not allowed to give them anything in the parking lot but that we will meet them somewhere else at an approximate time.
- f. Public Storage does not have trash containers in the building, trash must be taken out with you.

5. Basic Safety on Outings.

- a. The BOD is united in its decision that HOOP volunteers cannot initiate a meeting or contact with a homeless person themselves – they cannot return later, on their own, with supplies; all outings must be scheduled through the Scheduler. Anyone who returns to provide anything to the homeless at any time other than a scheduled HOOP outing does so completely on their own and against the advice of the HOOP BOD. This is both a safety and liability issue.
- b. No one may go to a remote sleeping area/gathering place alone. Always work in pairs or groups. If there are only 3 volunteers on an outing, then they must stay together at all times. It is recommended that if possible, only one car be taken if there are only 3 volunteers.
- c. At least one member during an outing must carry a cellular phone. Work/stay in pairs—do not leave anyone by themselves, and do not go looking for people by yourself!!!! When traveling in two cars, share cell numbers, incase you are separated by traffic.
- d. Do not bring purses, expensive jewelry or excess cash. Do not give out cash to the homeless.
- e. The team leader has responsibility for the overall safety of the group on his/her night and for making sure others in the group follow the rules and guidelines based on the training they have received. Volunteers (especially new ones) should use the team leaders to answer questions and to learn how to best handle different situations.
- f. If at any point during an outing anyone in the group feels threatened, if an unsafe situation develops, or if something just doesn't "seem right," the team leader makes the decision to leave the area. Volunteers must

let the team leader know of any concerns that may develop during an outing.

- g. Always remain aware of your surroundings and note where other team members are. Never allow a team member to become isolated and surrounded by a group of homeless. It is everyone's responsibility to be watchful for the safety of others in the group.
- h. Board members will have a list of volunteers and their contact information in case of emergency. If an emergency does occur during an outing/fundraiser, etc., call 911 first and then a board member for emergency contact information. The outing for the night is then cancelled. A list with the names and phone numbers of the board members will be given to each team leader.
- i. Except on rare occasions, only two vehicles are taken on outings. Trying to get around the downtown area, finding parking, and working from more than two cars becomes very difficult. It is inherently more difficult and risky to try to keep three cars together through downtown than to keep two cars together. If, at the last minute, you decide to bring supplies/donations that the leader does not know you are bringing, there may be a shortage of vehicle space, as well as storage space in the unit. Please check with the leader first.
- j. We do not give rides to the homeless.

6. Do's and Don'ts of an Outing.

- a. As a general rule, we try to avoid "pre-bagging" all of the food items handed out. We do pre-bag the snacks (when we have them to give out), but we ask the homeless their preference of sandwiches (if we have more than one type), fruit, and whether they want a boiled egg. By giving the person a choice, we have the opportunity to raise their self-esteem – they do not often get a choice in their circumstances. It does take a bit more time to ask which sandwich, which fruit they prefer, but it also helps make that human connection with them. Our goal is not to feed as many people as quickly as possible in an outing, but to actually add to their quality of life. There are times when the number of people we are serving is high, and under such circumstances it may be better to pre-bag all the food. Our goal is to treat these people with respect and not like they are part of an assembly line.
It will be a general policy to only give out three (3) snack items per person. We will also provide 1 pair of socks and 1 pair of underwear.
- b. If the homeless are crowding around a person who is trying to serve them from a vehicle, ask them to make a line and take turns or we will have to close up and leave, if necessary, do so.
- c. If you are by an open car door and you need to move, close the door as you leave; do not leave car doors open.
- d. Do not allow the homeless to reach into vehicles to "help themselves." Politely ask them to move back and ask how you can help them. If they ask what you have, instead of answering, ask "what do you need?" We are not a mobile store.
- e. Although we are not a registered with the IRS as a faith-based organization, often the homeless will ask for religious items. If we have the item(s) requested, it is acceptable to give it out. However, also realizing that HOOP members represent a broad spectrum of religious beliefs, when presenting a Bible or other written material, please ask if the version available is acceptable.
- f. In order to avoid volunteers being asked for cigarettes, it is the BOD's suggestion that volunteers not smoke in front of the homeless.
- g. If someone asks for an aspirin, etc., we have small bottles that we can give them with a few in it. Do not give anyone a whole bottle of aspirin, Tylenol, etc. Only give out a couple of aspirin, Tylenol, per person.
- h. Those who are not driving have permission to leave their cars at the Public storage unit parking lot. Safeco, at 500 North Meridian Street, has also given permission for our volunteers to park in their lot.
- i. If a decision is made that a certain area is currently off limits for our group, keep that information in the group. Do not discuss it with the people on the streets. Team leaders will be notified if/when that area is on

our route again. In general, decisions made by HOOP regarding policies, etc., should not be discussed with the homeless.

- j. A bottle of hand sanitizer is to be in each vehicle, and everyone is encouraged to use it when leaving to go to the next spot to serve. Please do not use it in front of the homeless – you may have just shaken their hand, but we don't want to offend them while trying to keep ourselves safe.
- k. Because of safety and liability issues, HOOP volunteers will not deliver or distribute candles, grills, charcoal, charcoal lighters or any foods (uncooked meats, in particular) that require refrigeration.
- l. Upon occasion we may find an individual in crisis. This may be physical or mental. In either case call 911 and give dispatch as much identifying information as you can including name, age, race and sex of the person, the type of crisis and let them know if you believe the person is homeless. IMPD has a dedicated homeless crisis unit. Keep the individual warm and as safe as possible without endangering yourself or the victim. Indiana's Good Samaritan law provides protection against liability for individuals providing care, only when they provide care for which they have been trained. Do not provide additional care unless you have been trained. The universal rule is: Do no harm.
- m. There are copies of "the Handbook of Help" in the third floor storage unit. Please take a copy, review the material and keep it for future reference. As needed, make referrals to specific service providers, saying, "This organization MAY be able to help." Do not make promises of assistance.
- n. If minors are found, ask if you may contact their parents just to let them know they are okay. If they agree do not betray the trust they have given, do not reveal their location, unless prior permission was given. They may be escaping an abusive home. Follow up by contacting Outreach Inc. at (877) 686-3818.

7. Donations and Receipts.

- a. A list of anything donated to HOOP must be given to the Board Secretary. This includes any items you may have picked up or collected for HOOP. It is important for our continuing 501(c)(3) status to keep up-to-date records of all donations. There may be other constraints regarding our donations and recordkeeping in the future. All volunteers will be updated when necessary.
- b. If volunteers collect donations for HOOP from someone who needs a receipt, please give the donor's name and address, along with the list of donated items, to the Board Secretary so (s)he can provide the donor a receipt. All receipts must come from the Board Secretary; volunteers may not give out receipts on behalf of HOOP.

8. Reimbursement Policies.

- a. Reimbursement for supplies purchased by members MAY or MAY NOT be allowed. Please check before you purchase anything for which you may want to be reimbursed.
- b. Reimbursement will not be made until receipts are received in a timely manner. Receipts will not be returned.

9. Marion County Board of Health (MCBOH) Rules

HOOP volunteers will follow rules established by the Marion County Board of Health (MCBOH) as described below:

- a. All food must be prepared in advance in a kitchen approved by the MCBOH or the Board of Health in an adjacent county. HOOP will provide MCBOH the names of churches and restaurants that provide food from their facilities.
- b. Hot water (in a thermos) is the **only** thing that may be prepared in a volunteer's home.
- b. Hand out only **unopened** and **individually-sealed** snacks and drinks. We are allowed to bring thermoses of hot water and packages of instant cocoa, oatmeal, soup, etc. Any boxes of cookies or crackers must be

- given as an intact and unopened package to a homeless person.
- c. We can still take fruit such as bananas, apples, oranges.
 - d. After discussions with the MCBOH, the HOOP BOD has determined that we can give out ice if disposable gloves or scoops are used.
 - e. We are not permitted to store ANY food items in our homes or refrigerators (if you bought snacks for the outing in advance, you may keep those items in your home or car (weather permitting) until the outing. Leftover food items cannot go to our homes to keep for another outing, but perishable items can be taken to Wheeler Mission (687-6795). Factory-sealed, unopened snacks left over from outings can be returned to the storage facility.
 - f. Hot food must be kept hot, cold food kept cold. Thermos type or other insulated containers must be used.

10. Team Leader Information.

- a. The board accepts recommendations and requests from experienced volunteers to become leaders.
- b. Before leading a group on their own, potential leaders must go out on one or more outings with experienced Leaders and /or Board members where the prospective team leader takes the lead for the night. After these outings, board will determine whether the individual is ready to lead a group.
- c. If you need/want to cancel an outing, please let the Scheduler know as soon as possible. Team leaders are required to let the Scheduler know if someone does not show up. It is also the volunteer's responsibility to notify the Scheduler, in addition to the team leader, that he/she will not be able to participate. The team leader should remind the volunteer of this responsibility.
- d. On any outing, if fewer than three arrive at the storage facility, contact the Scheduler to find a third, experienced person. If no one can be found to provide the third person, the outing must be cancelled, and any prepared/perishable food can be taken to the Wheeler Mission (enter from the back, phone 687-6795). No one should be going on an outing, unless scheduled by the Scheduler or the team Leader.
- e. Team leaders are required to notify the Scheduler, who will then notify the BOD, of problems concerning volunteers that may occur during their outings – this includes not following the guidelines, attendance at the outing, etc.
- f. Please submit your night's tally as soon as possible to the secretary (who is keeping the database) by e-mail. The tally should include the names of everyone on the outing, who drove, time started, and the time the outing was finished. Also, Gleaners requires that we document how many people were served each night with Gleaners food and how many were "new" to HOOP. Gleaners also requires that we note any children five and under, 6 – 17 years of age, or over 60 years of age who were served. Team leaders are responsible for collecting this information. The databases and tallies are a critical part of documenting who goes out when and how much is given out and received. This documentation is essential when we put together grant requests or fill out employer matching donation forms and is necessary for our 501c3 status.
- g. If any of your "regulars" do not have e-mail, please contact them with any e-mail updates that you receive.
- h. Team leaders, please do not leave items in the storage marked for your use only – the items in the storage are for everyone's use, and we do not have room to store extra things.
- i. Team leaders must be flexible with respect to who goes out with them so that new volunteers can go on the outings.