



Interfaith Hospitality Network[®]

a program of Family Promise[®]

Guide for Volunteer Coordinators

A Community Response for Homeless Families

Interfaith Hospitality Network Guide for Volunteer Coordinators

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Dear Friend,

Thank you for taking a leadership role as a coordinator in the Interfaith Hospitality Network (IHN). Your congregation joins thousands across the country that have compassionately opened their places of worship to families in need. As a coordinator, your gift of service, your guidance and support, is not only to guest families but also to members of your congregation.

With your help, volunteers (from youth to seniors) will find their roles in your congregation's program. They may choose to prepare meals, talk with guests, play with children, help with homework, set up accommodations, stay overnight, organize activities, coordinate donations, or accompany guests to look for apartments. Through all these activities, your volunteers will participate in an outreach ministry to help homeless families achieve independence.

This *IHN Guide for Volunteer Coordinators* will help you implement and manage the program in your congregation. This guide, together with the *IHN Guide for Volunteer Hosts*, addresses Network policies and procedures and promotes the spirit of hospitality in which the work of a Network is accomplished. Experience, along with the information presented in these Family Promise publications, will help you provide a program that benefits both guests and volunteers.

Welcome to the growing family of Interfaith Hospitality Networks, and thank you for your commitment.

Sincerely,



Karen Olson
President

The Role of IHN Coordinators

The success of each Network depends upon the efforts and enthusiasm of hundreds of volunteers. The volunteers who organize those volunteers and manage the Network program in each host congregation are called coordinators. A primary coordinator takes overall responsibility for ensuring that the host congregation's program runs smoothly.

Coordinators facilitate the work of the many volunteers needed to run host week. The roles and responsibilities of IHN volunteers are described in the *IHN Guide for Volunteer Hosts*; coordinators need to become familiar with that publication.

Many congregations choose to have more than one primary coordinator. By doing so, the responsibility is shared. It allows the congregation more flexibility in case one primary coordinator is not available for host week.

A. Primary Coordinator

Primary coordinators interact with volunteers, guests, clergy, and the Network director. Good communication skills, flexibility, and diplomacy are essential for the job.

The primary coordinator performs these and other tasks:

- Welcomes guests at a Sunday orientation meeting
- Remains on call during host week to solve problems and make decisions
- Acts as liaison to the Network director
- Serves on the Network Committee
- Works with the Network director to train volunteers
- Assists with volunteer recruitment, scheduling, and support
- Enlists and works with assistant coordinators who manage particular aspects of the program

B. Assistant Coordinators

Assistant coordinator positions include the following:

1. **Host Coordinator.** Schedules evening (5:30 p.m.-8:30 p.m.) and overnight (8:30 p.m.-7:00 a.m.) volunteers; works with the meal coordinator to make sure there are enough volunteers to prepare dinner and breakfast.
2. **Meal Coordinator.** Oversees the menu-planning for host week to avoid duplication and ensure that meals are well balanced. Schedules volunteers to prepare and serve dinner and breakfast.
3. **Supply Coordinator.** Keeps needed items in stock by purchasing or securing donations of food staples, paper products, toys and games, linens, cleaning supplies, baby needs, and other items for host week.
4. **Activities Coordinator.** Plans special events, arts-and-crafts activities, and games for children. May provide movies if a VCR is available.
5. **Donations Coordinator.** Collects and organizes donations of clothing, furniture, and household items; arranges distribution to guests once they are settled in permanent housing.

Coordinators work together to plan how the program will operate best in their facility. Some congregations have fewer than five assistant coordinators; several functions are sometimes combined into one job. For example, the meal coordinator purchases and organizes needed supplies, and the primary coordinator handles all the scheduling. Each congregation organizes the work in the most suitable manner for its circumstances. It's best to have the primary coordinator serve for a specified period of time, probably no longer than two years, to encourage wider participation in leadership roles.

II.

Volunteer Management

A. Recruiting Volunteers

Approximately 50 volunteers are needed as dinner cooks, evening and overnight hosts, and breakfast preparers for each host week. Other volunteers are needed to help with supplies, plan activities for children, do program laundry, and organize donations—but the majority of the work of host week is performed by the hosts and meal preparers.

Recruiting Ideas

Here are some techniques for recruiting volunteers for host week:

- Sponsor a Sign-up Saturday or Sunday one month before host week. Describe the program and announce the sign-up event in your congregation's newsletter. Enclose a flyer about it in the worship service bulletin. Place a sign-up board in a central location for sign-up after services.
- Announce the upcoming host week from the pulpit. The clergy-person or primary coordinator can encourage participation by making this announcement and by drawing attention to the notices in the bulletin and newsletter.
- Phone people who have already expressed interest in the program or who have volunteered previously.
- Ask volunteers to deliver testimonials about their positive volunteer experiences or to make announcements during worship services.
- Encourage groups, such as women's circles, Bible study groups, and youth groups, to participate in the program by working together to prepare meals, help with setup or takedown, or organize children's activities.
- Keep a list of volunteers from the first host week. One month before hosting again, email each volunteer a blank schedule with time slots for each job. Ask volunteers to return the schedule or call the coordinator with their time preferences. Then post a schedule with the remaining time slots that need to be filled.

Keeping the Network program visible throughout the year will help in recruiting volunteers. The clergyperson's ongoing support, through public recognition of the work of volunteers and the program, is vital. Stories about the Network in the congregation's bulletin or newsletter can help to maintain interest in the program.

Be sure to send volunteers' names and addresses to the Network director so that they can be added to the mailing list. Network newsletters and bulletins will help keep your volunteers up-to-date on what's happening throughout the Network.

B. Training and Support

Once recruited, volunteers will need training to be comfortable and successful in their roles. Training ensures the smooth functioning of the entire Network and helps to develop as much continuity as possible for guests.

Training takes place at each host congregation about two weeks before the congregation hosts for the first time. All volunteers from the host congregation should attend, as well as any volunteers from support congregations. The Network director, with assistance from the primary coordinator, leads the initial training sessions. Because new volunteers will always be joining the program, training sessions are held annually thereafter. Between training sessions, there may be individuals who would like to volunteer for the first time. If so, it is essential for them to read the *IHN Guide for Volunteer Hosts* and view the DVD *How Can I Help? Talking with Guests and Volunteers* before volunteering.

Volunteer training includes information about volunteers' roles and responsibilities in the daily routine of the Network. The training covers the information found in the Policies and Procedures section of the *IHN Guide for Volunteer Hosts*, as well as information specific to the particular host congregation. Volunteer training also provides guidance in host/guest relationships and helps volunteers increase their understanding of homelessness.

While training ensures that volunteers have the necessary knowledge, coordinators need to provide ongoing support. They should be available to answer questions and discuss any problems that come up during host week. Coordinators need to listen to the concerns expressed by volunteers and take appropriate action when necessary.

Coordinators should look for and encourage volunteers who show leadership. For example, an organized volunteer who cooks dinners for the Network on a regular basis might become a great meal coordinator. It's wise for coordinators to plan for the future of the program, and to be alert for those volunteers who might eventually fill positions of greater responsibility.

C. Recognition

Even if they don't say it, most people like to be recognized for their contributions. Thanking volunteers is an important part of supporting them.

In many Networks, the Board of Trustees recognizes volunteers at an annual dinner or other Network-wide event. But recognition by coordinators within each host congregation is also important. Here are some ways to acknowledge the important work of volunteers:

- Hold an annual celebration dinner in your congregation to recognize the work of volunteers.
- Send thank-you notes to volunteers from the clergyperson and primary coordinator once a year.
- Ask a particularly effective volunteer to help with the next volunteer training session or to write an article for the Network or national (Family Promise) newsletter.
- Present meaningful tokens of appreciation, perhaps a copy of a guest child's artwork that has been laminated and framed.
- Ask your clergyperson to acknowledge volunteers, either formally in front of the congregation or informally one-on-one. This acknowledgment can be especially meaningful if the clergyperson is also a volunteer.

There are many possibilities for acknowledging volunteers. Not all recognition has to be tangible. The important thing is that volunteers feel noticed and appreciated for their willingness to offer their time and talents.

III.

The Program Accommodations

A. Facilities

Coordinators are involved in planning the accommodations for guests at the host congregation. Safety and privacy are primary concerns. During host week, the congregational facility will become a temporary home for up to 14 people.

Ideally, each family will have a private sleeping area, probably in separate religious education classrooms. Alternatively, if one large room must be used for a sleeping area, partitions will be needed to provide privacy for each family. Night lights should be installed in each sleeping area to make young children feel comfortable and to make the exits visible. Sleeping areas must be convenient to bathroom facilities.

A single hospitality room, separated into an adult lounge (with sofa, chairs, tables, and a television set) and a children's activity area will make a good arrangement for adult relaxation and for supervision of children. Kitchen and dining facilities (pantry space, refrigerator space, dinnerware, and so forth) must be available.

All hospitality areas should be clearly defined—guests need to understand which rooms are available to them, and the host congregation should be comfortable with the intended use of the building. (Appendix B, Facility Checklist, can help you organize your facility.)

B. Safety Measures

Congregations must have a planned and posted exit route in case of fire or other emergency. This route must be reviewed with all guests weekly at the Sunday evening orientation meeting. The following safety equipment is essential: fully functioning smoke detectors, fire extinguishers, and lighted exit signs. Host congregations are urged to consider the layout of their guest accommodations and add all safety measures deemed necessary.

Coordinators need to complete Appendix A, Emergency Procedures, and post it near the telephone in the church or synagogue. Appendix D, Health Safety, should also be posted. Everyone should be made aware of all health safety precautions. Anyone in contact with blood or other bodily fluids must wear gloves; a supply of gloves should be kept near the First Aid Kit and also with the other IHN supplies.

C. Supplies and Equipment

The Network will provide beds (folding cots), pillows, pillow covers, and vinyl mattress covers. The host congregation must supply sheets, washable blankets, pillowcases, mattress pads, towels, and washcloths. An infant bathtub, a playpen, cribs, highchairs or booster chairs, and children's car seats should also be available at each host congregation. Usually, members of the congregation donate or lend this equipment. Before host week, these basic supplies should be on hand:

- Alarm clock(s)
- Baby bottles, liners
- Baby food, cereal
- Cleaning supplies, bleach
- Coloring books, crayons
- Cooking utensils
- Disposable diapers, wipes
- Facial tissues, paper towels
- First Aid Kit
- Food staples
- Infant soap, shampoo
- Iron, ironing board
- Lunch/sandwich bags
- Paper, pencils, pens
- Plastic or rubber gloves
- Recreational items
- Toiletries (shampoo, toothpaste, deodorant, etc.)
- Toys, books, games

D. Preparing for Host Week

All the hard work and organization of the coordinators will pay off during host week. Preparing for host week will become routine as the congregation gets used to the schedule and requirements of hosting guests.

The following schedule may be useful in preparing for host week:

One Month Before Host Week:

- _____ Sponsor Sign-Up Saturday/Sunday.
- _____ Put notices of host week dates in bulletin and newsletter.
- _____ Pursue recruitment of volunteers, if necessary.
- _____ Schedule the volunteers.
- _____ Plan training session, if necessary.

D. Preparing for Host Week (cont'd)

Friday Before Host Week:

- _____ Network director contacts coordinator with number and composition of families expected, and other information needed by coordinator (such as work schedules, medications, and food allergies). For example: Mother and Father with two children, ages 3 and 6, father leaves in own car for work at 6 a.m.; single Mom with 2-month-old baby on special medication; single Mom with three kids, ages 7, 3, and 6 months.
- _____ Coordinator talks with assistant coordinators to review number of guests and make appropriate preparations.
- _____ Coordinators call volunteers to remind them of scheduling and duties. (Alternatively, or additionally, coordinators mail reminder postcards 1 week before host week).

Saturday Before Host Week:

- _____ All equipment and supplies, including food staples, are purchased and organized in host congregation facility.
- _____ Hospitality rooms and guest areas are cleaned and organized for guests' arrival. (Religious education classes and youth groups may be recruited to decorate rooms with welcome signs or their original artwork.)
- _____ Menu-planning for the week is completed; meal preparers are notified of their assignments.

Guest Arrival (Sunday of Host Week):

- _____ Coordinator checks congregation's facilities; posts Guest Guidelines; posts Emergency Procedures (with emergency telephone numbers).
- _____ Cots are transported to congregation by Network van. Setup crew makes beds.
- _____ Guests have time to unpack.
- _____ Coordinator welcomes guests at orientation meeting.

IV.

What Happens During Host Week?

A. The Schedule

Evening

5:30 p.m.

- Hosts arrive.
- Review Hospitality Logbook.
- Determine work to be done.
- Check room accommodations.
- Dinner preparation.
- Set up dining area.

6:00 p.m.

- Welcome guests (5:00 p.m. on Sunday).
- On Sunday, help guests move in and set up sleeping areas; hold orientation meeting.

6:30 p.m.

- Dinner.
- Clean up dining room and kitchen.

7:30 p.m.

- Fellowship time.
- Children's activities and homework.
- Clean up hospitality room.
- Guests prepare lunches for next day.

10:00 p.m.

- Curfew. All guests should be in congregation's facilities unless special arrangements have been made.

11:00 p.m.

- Lights out.

(Note: Suggested bedtimes are 9:00 p.m. for children, 10:00 p.m. for teens.)

Morning

6:00 a.m.

- Wake up guests.

6:30 a.m.

- Breakfast.

6:50 a.m.

- Morning cleanup.

7:00 a.m.

- Van picks up guests.

7:00-7:30 a.m.

- Review Hospitality Logbook, make any required entries, and store logbook in a place accessible only to hosts. Check rooms and do final cleanup.

Saturday and Sunday Mornings

- If guests will leave the congregation later on Saturday or Sunday mornings, make arrangements with the Network director.
- Strip and fold cots and blankets (Sunday morning) for transporting; place pillows inside cots.
- Guests prepare clothes and other personal belongings for moving (Sunday morning).

Sunday Orientation

The primary coordinator conducts the guest orientation meeting, usually before the Sunday evening meal. The meeting sets the tone for host week. The coordinator greets and introduces guests and volunteers, acquaints guests with building and emergency procedures, reviews Network and congregation guidelines, enlists sign-ups on the chore list, and answers any questions.

The coordinator should give guests the congregation's phone number (or some other appropriate number) to call if they are going to be late for dinner on a particular evening. The coordinator should explain that volunteers need to know how many people to expect for dinner.

B. Policies and Procedures

The coordinators' major job is to ensure that everything is ready in advance of host week. During host week, coordinators must check in regularly to make sure everything is going smoothly. The primary coordinator (or a suitable alternate) should be readily available in case of an emergency or other problem requiring action, and all coordinators should understand and be able to implement the policies and procedures in Section V of the *IHN Guide for Volunteer Hosts*. Medical emergency procedures and the appropriate use of the Hospitality Logbook are especially important.

The Hospitality Logbook must be kept in a safe place accessible only to hosts. The primary coordinator should routinely check the logbook for information. The coordinator must phone or email the next host congregation's coordinator at the end of the week to relay all pertinent information in the logbook. The Network director must also be informed of anything requiring follow-up. In a medical emergency, the procedures on the Emergency Procedures form (see Appendix A) must be followed. The primary coordinator should be available to handle any arrangements that must be made after a guest has been transported to the hospital. The Network director should be notified and should be available to provide assistance as needed.

C. Handling Difficult Situations

Coordinators and hosts will encounter situations that are not covered in the IHN guides. For help with those situations, the best policy is to contact the Network director.

The following suggestions are intended to help new coordinators deal with difficult situations:

1. Guest Tardiness, Absence, or Disregard for Guidelines

If a guest misses a meal or returns somewhat later than usual in the evening without notifying volunteers, he or she may be house-hunting, job-hunting, or on a personal visit. Remind guests that they need to phone the host congregation if they will be late or absent, as specified in the Guest Guidelines.

Notify the Network director of all guest absences or other guideline violations. The director is responsible for working with guests to ensure compliance with the guidelines. If a guest continues to be late, absent, or in violation of other guideline(s), the Network director may decide to ask the family to leave the Network.

The Network director is the only person authorized to terminate a family's stay. Only the Network director has sufficient information about guest families to adequately address problem areas, although coordinators may provide input. The continuity of the program is maintained by vesting authority for all case management decisions with the Network director.

2. Handling Conflict

Living closely with new people can be difficult. Most Network guests support and care for one another, but tensions may mount and conflicts can occur. Sometimes family members aren't getting along with each other; sometimes there are problems between families. At no time, however, should anyone in the program, guests or volunteers, be subjected to physical or verbal abuse. If intervention is required, as coordinator, you should talk to both parties individually and act as mediator. Always inform the Network director about serious conflicts.

3. Parenting Issues

Network guests, like other people, have a wide range of parenting styles and skills. Some volunteers may have difficulty observing what they consider (or what indeed is) poor parenting. Parents are responsible for their children while the family is staying at the host congregation's facilities. You might remind volunteers that they can assist parents by engaging children in enjoyable activities, with the parents' permission and in their presence. Sometimes parents just need a break.

Of course, witnessed or suspected child abuse must be reported immediately to the Network director for appropriate referral.

4. Volunteer Expectations

Volunteers may be disappointed or angry if guests do not behave in a manner that volunteers find appropriate. Sometimes volunteers become upset if guests do not express appreciation for what the volunteers provide. At times, a guest may be discourteous to a volunteer (or vice versa). It is important for volunteers to recognize the tremendous stress that guests are under. Many will be tired and discouraged. You may need to reassure volunteers that discourteous behavior is not directed at them personally.

Occasionally, there may be fewer guests than anticipated staying in the Network, causing some volunteers to feel that they are not needed. Help volunteers understand that they are important and needed no matter how many guests are being served. Sharing some of the reasons for low numbers can be helpful: sometimes guests have appointments in the evening or are visiting family; the number of families needing shelter varies with the time of year and other factors; and sometimes a family leaves without notice. In any case, help volunteers by reminding them to be flexible and to offer their hospitality to the families who are in the Network.

The Network Committee

The Network Committee is composed of the primary coordinator of each host congregation, the Network director, and a representative of the Board of Trustees. The Network director serves as chair.

The Network Committee's purpose is to

- build consistency in the program from congregation to congregation,
- disseminate information among all Network participants and the Network director,
- address issues of concern.

The Network Committee meets every six to eight weeks during the first year; thereafter meetings are usually held once every rotation cycle. At meetings, members

- share Network successes;
- identify issues that need to be addressed;
- work together to solve problems;
- foster program continuity;
- work on various Network needs, such as special events, fundraising, and host volunteer training;
- hear from the Network director on issues of importance to all Network members.

Once the Network is well established, the Network Committee can provide additional learning opportunities by inviting guest speakers on subjects of concern. For example, a lawyer might address the legal rights of tenants, a social worker from Child Protective Services might train coordinators in the prevention of child abuse, or a job counselor from an employment program might talk about opportunities for job training. The issues discussed by outside speakers should reflect the needs and interests of the Network participants.

Highlights of the Network Committee meetings are recorded and distributed to all members. A committee secretary should be appointed annually for this task.

The Network Committee is invaluable to the members and to the ongoing development of the Network program. All primary coordinators (or their alternates) should attend each meeting and participate as fully as possible.

Appendix A

Emergency Procedures

Keep this form with required phone numbers posted near all telephones in the congregation hospitality areas.

Phone Numbers

RESCUE SQUAD: _____

POLICE: _____

ON-CALL PHYSICIAN OR NURSE:

Name: _____ Number: _____

HOSPITAL EMERGENCY ROOM: _____

FIRE DEPARTMENT: _____

PRIMARY COORDINATOR:

Name: _____ Number: _____

BACKUP VOLUNTEER:

Name: _____ Number: _____

NETWORK DIRECTOR:

Name: _____ Number: _____

In a Medical Emergency

1. **Phone 911, the rescue squad, or police.**
2. A host should accompany the guest to the hospital. If a sufficient number of hosts are not present to permit one to go to the hospital, call the backup volunteer or volunteer coordinator to accompany the guest (or meet the guest at the hospital).
3. Report the emergency to the volunteer coordinator and Network Director.
4. The accompanying host or backup volunteer must report back as soon as possible concerning medical status and arrangements.
5. Record and date all information in the Hospitality Logbook.

Appendix B

Facility Checklist

The IHN guides provide a framework for your facility. Use this list to make decisions for your congregation.

1. Accommodations

- A. What rooms are to be used?
- B. Which bathrooms are available to guests?
- C. What storage space is available for linens, guests' belongings, etc.?

2. Security

- A. Do any rooms need to be locked? Who is responsible for keeping rooms secure?
- B. Overnight security: When to lock up? How?

3. Kitchen

- A. Which pantries and cabinets store program staples?
- B. How should leftovers be used or distributed?
- C. Is the refrigerator open to guests apart from mealtimes?

4. Housekeeping

- A. What specific chores need to be done daily? Weekly?
- B. Whose responsibility are they?
(Note: Develop a chore list to review at the Sunday orientation meeting. Fill in names, and post the completed list so that chores are clearly assigned.)

5. Laundry

- A. Where is clean linen kept?
- B. Are the congregation's laundry facilities (if any) available to guests?
- C. Who does program laundry? Where?

6. Telephone

- A. Are local emergency numbers posted at all phones?
- B. What is your policy on guests' use of phones?

7. Children

- A. What supplies, games, and books are available for children?
- B. What areas are available for play (indoor and outdoor)?

8. Other

Appendix C

Interfaith Hospitality Network Guest Guidelines

This agreement is signed by each guest head of family when entering the Network.

1. I will seek housing, financial assistance, and/or employment on a daily basis while I am staying in the Network, and I will meet regularly with the Network director to tell him or her of my progress.
2. The Network is a drug-free and alcohol-free environment. I will remain substance-free while in the program. I understand that anyone under the influence of alcohol or drugs will not be accepted into the Network.
3. No weapons or things that can be used as weapons are permitted onto the property of the day center or any host congregation.
4. There is no smoking in any Network building. I will smoke only in defined smoking areas outside the buildings.
5. I understand that for the safety of children and other guests, all medication must be in a lockbox provided by the Network Director.
6. I will treat staff, volunteers, and other guests with respect and courtesy.
7. I will provide a nurturing environment for my children. I will not leave them unattended at any time. I will discipline my children with patience and understanding.
8. I will keep all areas clean by picking up after my family and assisting with housekeeping chores. I will eat only in the kitchen and dining room areas, unless otherwise specified by the host congregation.
9. To ensure the safety of all, I will sign out and/or notify a host when leaving the congregation. I will notify the hosts if I will be late and/or miss dinner one evening. I understand that my bed cannot be guaranteed if I choose not to return.
10. If I miss the Network van, I will find public or other transportation to the host congregation.
11. I understand that the Network and the hosts are not responsible for lost or stolen items.
12. I understand that anyone with a contagious disease or illness must leave the Network until the period of contagion is over. Other housing arrangements will be made by the Network director.
13. I understand that no visitors are allowed at any Network facilities. Only those persons listed on my intake form may stay with me.
14. I understand that the Network provides short-term housing. The maximum length of stay in the Network is 30 days.

I understand the rules and policies above and agree to abide by them while using the services of the Interfaith Hospitality Network.

Signed: _____ Date: _____

Signed: _____ Date: _____

Family Members: _____