

Dear Volunteer:

This Handbook has been prepared to inform you about the HOTEL GRACE shelter’s history, philosophy, practices, and policies. Although no handbook can answer every question, we have attempted to cover the major points of volunteering at HOTEL GRACE. We ask that you read the Handbook carefully and refer to it whenever questions arise. Please always feel free to call Pastor Richie Gonzalez (774-578-1128) to get further clarification or to share your questions or concerns.

HOTEL GRACE utilizes the support of volunteers in all aspects of its program and services. Volunteers are an integral part of providing adequate services for the guests of HOTEL GRACE including direct care and community support. Volunteers provide coverage during the evening and overnight shifts from 5:00PM through 9:00AM. You will be working with Net of Compassion employees and supervisors.

As a volunteer you are demonstrating to our guests that there are people in our community who really care about other people and are willing to donate their precious time and energy to provide food, shelter, companionship, and compassion to those going through difficult times. Many people who pass through our doors have never before experienced this type of unconditional kindness and caring from strangers. We know you are all busy people and have many other things you could be doing, but you have chosen to volunteer here, working with people struggling through some really tough times.

We hope this handbook will allow you to feel comfortable with HOTEL GRACE. Again, please don’t hesitate to ask questions; we will gladly answer them. We also welcome your ideas for ways to improve our service. We believe you will enjoy your volunteer work here and get to know and appreciate your fellow volunteers. You will also get to know and appreciate the guests, people who are experiencing homelessness, but who are working towards a better life.

On behalf of Pastor Richie, fellow volunteers, and guests, thank you in advance for your time, energy, commitment, and compassion.

**WELCOME to HOTEL GRACE**

HOTEL GRACE is a project founded as a collaborative effort between the Net of Compassion, St. John’s Parish, and the Unitarian Universalist Church of Worcester. As an Overflow Emergency Shelter, HOTEL GRACE provides a place for the homeless to have a hot meal and a warm place to sleep from November 1st- March 31th

HOTEL GRACE provides care, concern and assistance to homeless individuals that struggle with addiction, mental illness, poverty, and transient situations that have caused the person to lack the resources needed to find immediate housing. We provide a safe environment and support for the people we serve.

HOTEL GRACE is located at Ascension church Monsignor Tinsley Center,44 Vernon st Worcester, MA

HOTEL GRACE is a program of Net of Compassion. a 501©3 non-profit organization.

**Vision:**

To provide safe, sanitary, secure emergency shelter for all people in the Worcester community needing temporary shelter.

**Mission:**

Our mission is to provide the following to our guests:

**G**uidance

**R**estoration

**A**cceptance

**C**ompassion

**E**mpowerment

**Values:**

HOTEL GRACE’s values and beliefs are guidelines for role modeling positive behavior and working relationships between our staff/volunteers and our guests.

**Respect:**

HOTEL GRACE treats all people with dignity and respect, valuing individual and cultural differences. We do not discriminate on the basis of race, ethnicity, religion, gender, sexual orientation, physical disabilities, or socioeconomic background.

**HOTEL GRACE Philosophy:**

The philosophy of HOTEL GRACE combines numerous ideals in an effort to further support our mission and values. Those ideals include: a commitment to confidentiality,  
a commitment to the guests served, and a responsibility to treat all people with dignity, respect.

**Purpose and Function Statements:**

HOTEL GRACE is an emergency overflow shelter serving homeless and transient individuals. For the purpose of these policies and procedures, “homeless” means an individual or family that lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence.

HOTEL GRACE recognizes that many people may end up homeless as a result of situations that can be related but are not limited to: addiction, mental illness, poverty, inability to secure affordable housing, inability to secure a living wage, and lack of skills and/or resources.

HOTEL GRACE is a program designed to provide meals, immediate shelter, safety, as well as referrals to and networking for resources for guests served.

HOTEL GRACE does assist the various guests served by offering, with written permission, the ability to network and make referrals for services. Continuing education is offered to staff and volunteers.

HOTEL GRACE believes in involving the guests we serve in the process of helping themselves to lead independent and self-sufficient lives.

HJOTEL GRACE believes in the rights of all people to live and make choices that bring them optimum happiness, good health, and wellness while honoring their rights and responsibilities for their actions.

**Volunteer Responsibilities**

Each volunteer position has certain specific responsibilities. But, all volunteers should conduct themselves in a mature, professional manner. We must respect the dignity of each guest and support the HOTEL OTE:LHGRACE philosophy and mission.

**Shift volunteers responsibilities include the following**:

**Evening Shift: 5pm– 9pm** Volunteers will help with the following tasks during this shift, as directed by the supervisors:

**PRIOR TO GUESTS’ ARRIVAL**

* Place blankets and pillows with clean pillow cases on each cot
* Prepare meal and set up food serving tables
* Set up dining tables and chairs
* Set up Registration Table and Security area
* Secure bathrooms for safety
* Assist in the orderly assembly of guests

**DURING THE EVENING WITH GUESTS**

* Registration temperature check of all guests
* Masks will be given to each guest who needs one or has a substandard mask
* Register each guest according to the ***Registration Procedures*** which includes locking guests’ personal property in a secure area
* Assign each guest his/her cot (Pastor Richie or designated supervisor)
* Assist guests with settling in to the shelter and their specific cot as needed
* Be sure guests have a cot, a blanket, and a pillow
* Monitor social distance, proper mask wearing, and hand sanitizing
* Monitor bathrooms for safety as indicated
* Serve dinner meal and beverage to guests
* Rotate through the dining and seating areas to be certain the needs of the guests are being met within the scope of services provided
* Clean up food and kitchen
* Provide supervised outdoor breaks two times per evening
* Distribute clothing donations
* Provide activities and guided discussions as appropriate
* Continually monitor environment for safety, security, and comfort

**Overnight Shift: 9pm-1am**

**WHILE GUESTS ARE SLEEPING**

* Monitor bathrooms and sleeping areas for safety
* Assist guests as needed for comfort
* Check Registration Book for accuracy
* Register late arrivals and assign cot as needed

**Morning Shift: 5am-9am**

* Set upbreakfast items if available
* Return personal belongings to each guest
* Collect blankets and pillow cases and place in laundry bags
* Wipe cots with anti-bacterial solution/wipes
* Collect pillows
* Store chairs and dining tables
* Check out guests

**Volunteering: Policies and Procedures**

**Application/Training:** Volunteers must complete a Volunteer Application and attend orientation and/ or on-going training as necessary.

**Attendance:** Signup sheets are necessary for our program in order for us to keep an accurate record of your volunteer time. We ask that you sign in and out each time you volunteer. It is very important to be punctual when you arrive for your shift.

**If you are unable to cover your shift, please call Pastor Richie as soon as you know you will need a substitute.**

**Boundaries and Limitations**: Please maintain proper boundaries with guests; being kind and compassionate is important but becoming too friendly or overly personal with guests can create difficulties. If you are uncertain as to how to handle situations that involve boundary issues, please consult with a supervisor. Interpersonal relationships with Hotel Grace guests are strictly prohibited and such behavior is grounds for immediate dismissal from all volunteer activities.

**Confidentiality:** Confidentiality is critical when working with people in vulnerable situations**.** Whatever is shared with you at HOTEL GRACE is considered private information.

**Drugs and Alcohol:** GRACE House is a substance-free environment. Please report any suspected use/abuse to the Executive Director.

**Equal Volunteering Opportunity:** HOTELGRACE provides equal volunteering opportunity for everyone regardless of age, sex, color, race, creed, national origin, religious persuasion, marital status, sexual orientation, political belief, or disability that does not prohibit performance of essential job functions. All matters relating to volunteering are based upon ability to perform the job as well as dependability and reliability.

**Harassment:** Sexual harassment or harassing conduct will not be tolerated at HOTEL GRACE House If you feel you have been harassed, or if observe harassment of a guest, report your concerns immediately to the Executive Director or Shift Supervisor.

**Incident Reports:** Volunteers will be required to document any unusual incidents that may occur on a shift on the Incident Report. Copies are located in the Registration Notebook (Examples of incidents that need reporting include: volunteer or guest injury, medical emergency, serious disagreements or conflicts, theft/missing items, law enforcement involvement, and any other unusual situations.).

**Meetings:**. There will be occasional Volunteer Support meetings that will be opportunities to discuss situations and brainstorm solutions with other volunteers. These meetings are optional, but a good opportunity to share concerns and ideas for improving services. All of our current procedures have been developed over time and changes/improvements have been based on experience and feedback from staff/volunteers and guests. Suggestions are always welcomed, however a consistent process is imperative to our operation. PLEASE DO NOT CHANGE PROCEDURES ON YOUR OWN.

**Smoking:** Smoking is not permitted inside HOTEL GRACE. Guests and volunteers may smoke in the designated outside area only during the two breaks provided during the first shift.

**Feelings that may be experienced by people who are homeless:**

**Anxiety:** A guest may feel extremely anxious for a variety of reasons, such as due to a lack of safety and predictability, because of substance use, due to mental health issues, and because they are in an unfamiliar environment with strangers. Anxiety can create a “fight” or “flight” reaction and we need to be conscious of this in our interactions.

**Helplessness:** Often a guest may feel hopeless and feel like giving up. We can provide a listening ear, encouragement, and referrals to other resources in the community that may be useful.

**Shame**: A guest may feel ashamed that they are in a position to be at a shelter. Theymay have been competent and self-reliant in the past but now find themselves homeless and needing help. This may make them feel incompetent and ashamed.

**Anger:** This may be directed at others, such as family, partners, other guests or even volunteers. It is our job to maintain the safety of others at the shelter and we need to be aware of any situations that seem to be escalating towards a conflict.

**Ambivalence:** A person in crisis feels ambivalent because of struggling with independence vs. dependence, self-reliance vs. reliance upon others, controlling emotions vs. losing control, and increasing self-confidence by managing by him/her vs. increasing vulnerability by reaching out to another for help.

**Low Self-esteem:** All of the above feelings can produce a decrease in self-esteem and leave the individual feeling extremely vulnerable. In addition, a guest may have limited opportunities or an inability to perform daily living routines such as taking care of his/her hygiene and laundering their clothing. This may have a significant impact on how they feel about themselves.

**Communication**

**How NOT to communicate with HOTEL GRACE Guests:  
(Or children, neighbors, students, friends, co-workers, etc.)**

In talking with guests at HOTEL GRACE, it’s important to avoid certain types of responses that block communication and put the guests in powerless positions. Examples of ineffective responses include the following:

**1. Ordering, warning or threatening –** “*You have to eat now*” or “*If you don’t do it, you’ll be sorry*.” This can produce fear, defensiveness, or resistance in guests and leave them feeling rejected and/or humiliated.

**2. Arguing**– “*You’re wrong because*....” Or “*I told you that you better do it this way or else*”. Responses like this may produce helplessness and defensiveness and set up a win/lose situation.

**3. Blaming or criticizing –** “*it’s your fault*,” or *“You are the problem”.* Responses like this communicate a lack of respect and may engender feelings of inferiority and resistance or withdrawal in guests.

**6. Sarcasm or teasing –**Sarcastic remarks and responses can hurt and humiliate clients, resulting in anger, resistance or withdrawal.

**7. Avoiding/Ignoring -** This can communicate disinterest, leaving guests feeling ignored and/or rejected. If a guest is demanding your attention, ask him/her to wait until to can assist with a request or have another volunteer help

**8. Labeling –** “*You are being crazy” or “You are acting like a loser”.* This can make guests feel like they are being seen as problem types rather than individuals; it can produce feelings of inferiority, resistance, and anger.

**HOTEL GRACE Rules**

1. **NO alcohol or drugs are allowed within the shelter. Alcohol or non-prescription drug use is not allowed at any time during a guest’s stay and would be grounds for banning from the shelter for the evening or for the length of time determined by Pastor Richie.**
2. **Guests will advise volunteers of any medications in their possession during the registration process and will follow HOTEL GRACE procedures for administration/storage of medication.**
3. **No smoking in the facility. Smoking in designated outdoor area ONLY.**
4. **There will be no threatening or abusive behavior or language permitted.**
5. **Guests must follow the directions of HOTEL GRACE volunteers. If there is a problem, guests must discuss it with the designated supervisor.**
6. **Overhead lights will be turned off at approximately 10 p.m. or soon after the evening reflection. Last cigarette break will be as determined by staff and there will be no going outside after 10:00 p.m.**
7. **All cell phones/electronics shall be put on silent at 10:00 p.m. (if you absolutely must make a phone call after that time, please keep your voice quiet in respect for those trying to sleep).**
8. **No sexual activity or public display of affection is allowed at HOTEL GRACE**
9. **Guests are never allowed in kitchen.**
10. **Guests are not allowed on other guest’s cots.**
11. **Please have at least socks on your feet at all times. No bare feet.**
12. **Guests are asked to take part in daily chores as assigned by staff.**
13. **Be respectful of staff, volunteers, fellow guests, and all HOTEL GRACE property.**
14. **Intentional damage to property or damage resulting from carelessness will result in repayment to HOTEL GRACE repairs**
15. **Male guests are strictly prohibited from the female guest area.**
16. **a section for transgender folks will be provided**