

New Vision Youth & Community Services

VOLUNTEER HANDBOOK

"Empowering Communities. Transforming Lives."

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Revision Note: This handbook supersedes all prior versions. Please discard any previously issued Volunteer Handbooks and retain this current edition. Policies are subject to periodic review and update by the Leadership Team.

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Section 1 — Welcome Letter

Dear New Vision Volunteer,

On behalf of the entire leadership team, staff, and the many young people and families we serve, welcome to New Vision Youth & Community Services. We are truly grateful that you have chosen to invest your most valuable resource — your time — into building a stronger, more hopeful community. Your presence here is not simply appreciated; it is essential.

New Vision Youth & Community Services was founded on the belief that every young person, regardless of their background or circumstance, deserves the opportunity to discover their potential, build lasting skills, and experience the kind of consistent support that transforms lives. Every day, our team works to make that belief a reality through mentorship, education, family support, and community connection. And every day, volunteers like you make that work possible.

We want you to know that you are joining more than an organization — you are joining a movement. A movement that says every child matters, every family deserves dignity, and every community has the capacity to rise. By walking through our doors and giving your time, your talent, and your heart, you are affirming that conviction alongside us.

This handbook has been prepared to ensure that your experience as a volunteer is safe, fulfilling, and impactful — both for you and for the people we serve together. Please read it carefully. The policies and guidelines within are not simply rules; they are the standards that protect our participants, our volunteers, our staff, and the integrity of our mission. We ask that you uphold them with the same commitment you bring to everything else.

Our **Mission** is clear: *To provide quality programming, mentorship, and support services that empower youth and strengthen families and communities.*

Our **Vision** is bold: *A community where every young person has the tools, resources, and support needed to thrive.*

You are now part of that mission. You are now part of that vision.

We are honored to have you with us. Thank you for your service, your compassion, and your commitment to our community's young people. Together, we are building something extraordinary — one relationship, one interaction, one life at a time.

With deep gratitude and great excitement,

The Leadership Team

New Vision Youth & Community Services

Section 2 —Organizational Overview

History & Founding Purpose

New Vision Youth & Community Services was established as a nonprofit organization driven by a founding conviction: that communities are only as strong as the systems of support they build around their young people and families. Emerging from recognition that too many youth in underserved communities lacked access to mentorship, enrichment opportunities, and basic family support resources, New Vision was created to fill those gaps with intentional, high-quality programming.

From its earliest days, the organization has been guided by a commitment to equity — ensuring that geography, income, or family circumstance does not determine a child's future. Today, New Vision Youth & Community Services continues to grow its reach, deepen its impact, and strengthen its partnerships across the community in pursuit of that original vision.

Mission Statement

To provide quality programming, mentorship, and support services that empower youth and strengthen families and communities.

Vision Statement

A community where every young person has the tools, resources, and support needed to thrive.

Core Values

The following values guide every decision, interaction, and program at New Vision Youth & Community Services:

✓ Integrity	✓ Compassion	✓ Excellence
✓ Equity	✓ Empowerment	✓ Community

- **Integrity:** We do what we say, say what we mean, and hold ourselves accountable to the highest ethical standards.
- **Compassion:** We approach every person — youth, family, volunteer, and staff member — with empathy, patience, and genuine care.
- **Excellence:** We pursue quality in all things, refusing to accept mediocrity when our community deserves our best.
- **Equity:** We acknowledge systemic inequity and actively work to dismantle barriers that prevent access and opportunity.
- **Empowerment:** We believe in the capacity of every individual to grow, lead, and transform their own lives with the right support.
- **Community:** We are stronger together. We build relationships, bridge divides, and create belonging for everyone we serve.

Programs & Services Overview

Program / Service Area	Description
Youth Mentorship Program	One-to-one and group mentoring connecting youth with trained adult mentors who provide consistent guidance, encouragement, and academic support.
After-School Programs	Structured academic enrichment, tutoring, literacy support, STEM exploration, and arts programming for school-age youth in a safe, supervised setting.
Community Outreach	Events, resource fairs, and neighborhood engagement initiatives designed to connect community members with critical local services and information.
Family Support Services	Wraparound support for families including resource navigation, parenting workshops, crisis assistance referrals, and family engagement programming.
Workforce Development	Career readiness workshops, job placement support, resume building, interview preparation, and vocational skills training for youth and young adults.

Organizational Structure

New Vision Youth & Community Services operates under the following organizational hierarchy:

Level	Role / Body	Primary Responsibility
1	Board of Directors	Governance, fiduciary oversight, strategic direction, and organizational accountability.
2	Executive Director	Day-to-day operational leadership, staff management, and mission execution.
3	Program Staff	Program design, direct service delivery, participant case management, and volunteer supervision.
4	Volunteers	Direct service, program support, event assistance, mentorship, and community engagement under staff supervision.

Non-Discrimination Statement

New Vision Youth & Community Services is committed to providing services, programs, and a volunteer environment free from discrimination. We do not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, or any other protected characteristic. This commitment applies to all volunteers, staff, participants, and community members associated with our organization.

Section 3 — Volunteer Expectations

Volunteers are vital members of the New Vision team. The expectations outlined in this section apply to all volunteers, regardless of role, and are designed to protect participants, maintain organizational integrity, and ensure a positive experience for everyone involved.

General Expectations for All Volunteers

- Represent New Vision Youth & Community Services with professionalism, integrity, and respect at all times.
- Arrive on time for scheduled volunteer commitments fully prepared to serve.
- Follow the guidance and direction of designated program staff and supervisors.
- Treat all program participants, families, staff, and fellow volunteers with dignity and respect.
- Maintain strict confidentiality regarding all participant information and organizational matters.
- Adhere to all policies, procedures, and guidelines set forth in this handbook.
- Complete all required onboarding steps prior to beginning volunteer service.
- Report concerns, incidents, or unsafe conditions to a staff supervisor immediately.

Volunteer Roles & Role-Specific Responsibilities

Volunteers are placed in roles aligned with organizational needs and individual skill sets. The following roles are currently active within our programs:

Volunteer Role	Primary Responsibilities
Youth Mentor	Provide consistent one-on-one or group mentoring, serve as a positive role model, support academic progress, and participate in scheduled mentor/mentee activities.
Program Assistant	Support program staff in day-to-day delivery of activities, assist with materials, manage participant engagement, and help maintain a safe, organized program environment.
Event Support Volunteer	Assist with setup, registration, coordination, and breakdown of organizational events, resource fairs, and community outreach activities.
Administrative Volunteer	Support office operations, data entry, filing, communications, and other administrative tasks as assigned by staff.
Outreach Volunteer	Represent New Vision at community events, distribute information, connect community members with organizational resources, and support awareness campaigns.

Time Commitment Expectations

- Volunteers are expected to honor the schedule agreed upon at the time of onboarding.
- Minimum time commitments vary by role and will be confirmed during orientation.

- Volunteers are encouraged to communicate proactively if their availability changes.
- A consistent, reliable presence is especially critical for Youth Mentor volunteers, as reliability is foundational to the trust and development of youth participants.

Orientation & Training Requirements

All volunteers must complete the following prior to beginning service:

1. Submission and approval of a volunteer application.
2. Completion of a satisfactory background check.
3. Attendance at a mandatory volunteer orientation session.
4. Completion of all role-specific training modules as assigned.
5. Review and signed acknowledgment of this Volunteer Handbook.
6. Any additional training required by program area (e.g., trauma-informed care, mandated reporter training).

Background Check Requirement

⚠ Important Notice

All volunteers who will have direct contact with youth or vulnerable populations are required to submit to and pass a criminal background check prior to beginning service. A background check that reveals certain offenses may disqualify an individual from volunteering in youth-serving roles. New Vision Youth & Community Services reserves the right to make placement decisions based on background check results in compliance with applicable law.

Handbook Acknowledgment

All volunteers must read this handbook in its entirety and sign the Acknowledgment & Agreement Form found in Section 14. A signed copy must be submitted to program staff before volunteer service begins and will be retained in the volunteer's file.

Confidentiality

Volunteers will have access to sensitive information about participants, families, and organizational operations. All such information is strictly confidential and must not be shared with any unauthorized party — including family members, friends, or social media audiences. Confidentiality obligations continue beyond the volunteer's active service period.

Professionalism at All Times

Volunteers are representatives of New Vision Youth & Community Services in every setting — inside and outside of program spaces. Volunteers are expected to conduct themselves with the highest level of professionalism whether on-site, at community events, online, or in informal settings where their association with the organization may be known.

New Vision Youth & Community Services | Volunteer Handbook | Confidential

Section 4 — Code of Conduct

New Vision Youth & Community Services holds every volunteer to a high standard of personal and professional conduct. Our participants — particularly the youth we serve — must be able to trust and feel safe with every adult in our spaces. The following standards are non-negotiable and apply at all times during volunteer service.

Zero Tolerance Policy

New Vision Youth & Community Services maintains an absolute zero-tolerance policy for harassment, discrimination, abuse, or exploitation of any kind — whether directed toward program participants, families, staff, or fellow volunteers. Any such conduct will result in immediate dismissal and may be reported to appropriate authorities.

Prohibited Conduct

The following behaviors are strictly prohibited for all volunteers:

7. **Harassment & Discrimination:** Any form of harassment, bullying, discrimination, or intimidation based on race, gender, age, disability, religion, sexual orientation, or any other characteristic is strictly prohibited.
8. **Romantic or Sexual Relationships with Participants:** Under no circumstances shall any volunteer engage in or pursue a romantic, sexual, or intimate relationship with any current or former program participant. This is a non-negotiable boundary and a serious violation of professional ethics.
9. **Alcohol & Substance Use:** Volunteers must not use, possess, or be under the influence of alcohol or any illegal substance while volunteering, on organizational property, or at any event representing New Vision.
10. **Physical Discipline:** Physical discipline, physical restraint, or any form of corporal punishment of youth is strictly and absolutely prohibited under any circumstances.
11. **Unsanctioned One-on-One Contact with Minors:** Volunteers must never be alone with a minor without another screened adult present. All one-on-one interaction must occur in open, visible, public spaces. See the Two-Adult Rule in Section 5.
12. **Unauthorized Photography or Recording:** Photographing, recording, or sharing images or video of program participants without verified written organizational consent is strictly prohibited.

- 13. Personal Financial Transactions:** Volunteers must not engage in any personal financial transactions with participants or their families, including lending money, accepting gifts of monetary value, or soliciting donations.
- 14. Inappropriate Social Media Conduct:** Volunteers must not post, share, or comment on social media in any manner that identifies, depicts, or reflects negatively on participants, families, or the organization. See Section 7 for full communication guidelines.
- 15. Disrespectful Conduct:** Volunteers must treat all staff, peers, participants, and families with consistent respect, courtesy, and professionalism. Rude, dismissive, hostile, or unprofessional behavior will not be tolerated.

Consequences for Code of Conduct Violations

Violations of this Code of Conduct may result in the following actions, depending on severity:

- **Verbal Warning:** Issued for minor or first-time infractions.
- **Written Warning:** Issued for repeated or more serious infractions; placed in the volunteer's file.
- **Suspension:** Immediate removal from volunteer duties pending investigation.
- **Dismissal:** Permanent termination of volunteer relationship for serious or egregious violations.
- **Referral to Authorities:** Conduct involving harm or risk of harm to participants will be reported to appropriate law enforcement and child protective agencies.

Section 5 — Safety Guidelines

The safety of every participant, volunteer, and staff member is the highest operational priority at New Vision Youth & Community Services. All volunteers are expected to familiarize themselves with the safety procedures outlined in this section and to actively contribute to maintaining a secure program environment.

Physical Safety in Program Spaces

- Maintain clear pathways and ensure no obstructions block emergency exits at any time.
- Report any damaged equipment, broken fixtures, spills, or physical hazards to staff immediately.
- Ensure only authorized individuals are present in program spaces — question and report unfamiliar adults to staff.
- Do not allow unauthorized access to secured program areas.
- Wear your name badge/lanyard visibly at all times while on-site.

⚠ Two-Adult Rule — Mandatory

At no time shall any volunteer be alone with a minor without a second screened adult present. All volunteer-youth interactions must take place in open, observable spaces. This rule is non-negotiable and is designed to protect both the youth we serve and our volunteers. Any violation of the Two-Adult Rule is grounds for immediate dismissal.

Emergency Procedures

Fire Emergency:

16. Activate the nearest fire alarm pull station immediately upon discovering or being notified of a fire.
17. Assist in evacuating all participants via designated exit routes — do not use elevators.
18. Guide all participants to the designated outdoor assembly area.
19. Take attendance/headcount of all participants in your care once at the assembly point.
20. Do not re-enter the building for any reason until authorized by the fire marshal or site supervisor.
21. Call 911 if not already done.

Medical Emergency:

22. Remain calm and call 911 immediately for any life-threatening emergency.
23. Notify a staff member or supervisor immediately — do not attempt to treat serious injuries alone.
24. If trained, administer first aid until emergency services arrive.
25. Do not move a participant who may have a spinal or neck injury.
26. Complete an Incident Report Form immediately following any medical emergency — forms available from staff.
27. Do not contact the participant's family or make any public statements about the incident — contact a staff supervisor.

Lockdown / Security Emergency:

28. Upon announcement or directive from staff, immediately move all participants to the nearest secure interior room.
29. Lock or barricade the door if possible, turn off lights, and move away from windows and doors.
30. Keep participants calm and quiet.
31. Do not open the door for anyone until law enforcement has given an all-clear.
32. Call 911 only if it is safe to do so without drawing attention.

Supervision Ratios

All program areas must maintain appropriate volunteer-to-youth supervision ratios as directed by program staff. Standard guidance is as follows:

Age Group	Recommended Minimum Ratio
Ages 5–8 (Early Elementary)	1 adult per 5 youth
Ages 9–12 (Upper Elementary)	1 adult per 8 youth
Ages 13–17 (Middle/High School)	1 adult per 10 youth
Young Adults (18+)	As directed by program staff

Vehicle & Transportation Safety

Volunteers who transport participants as part of an approved organizational activity must:

- Have prior written authorization from the Executive Director or designee.
- Possess a valid driver's license and current automobile insurance.
- Never transport a minor without a second screened adult present in the vehicle.
- Ensure all passengers are properly restrained with seat belts at all times.
- Never use a mobile phone while operating a vehicle transporting participants.
- Never transport participants in a personal vehicle without explicit organizational approval.

Reporting Unsafe Conditions

Any volunteer who identifies an unsafe condition, security risk, or potential hazard must report it to a staff supervisor immediately. Written documentation may also be required. Do not attempt to correct a serious safety hazard independently — notify staff and allow the appropriate party to respond.

First Aid & Incident Reporting

- First aid kits are located in designated areas of each program space — staff will identify these during orientation.
- All injuries, accidents, or incidents involving participants or volunteers must be documented using an Incident Report Form, available from program staff.
- Incident reports must be submitted to the program supervisor within 24 hours of the event.
- Volunteers must never provide prescription medications to participants.

Personal Safety & Awareness

- Trust your instincts. If a situation feels unsafe, remove yourself and/or participants and report it to staff immediately.
- Be aware of your surroundings at all times, particularly during outdoor events or community outreach activities.
- Do not share personal identifying information (home address, personal phone number) with participants or their families.

- Report any threats, intimidation, or concerning behavior directed at you or others to a staff supervisor and, if necessary, law enforcement.

Section 6 — Mandated Reporting

🚫 Legal Requirement — All Volunteers Are Mandated Reporters

Under Georgia law (O.C.G.A. § 19-7-5), all persons who have reasonable cause to believe that a child has been abused or neglected are required to report that suspicion. New Vision Youth & Community Services treats all volunteers as mandated reporters. Failure to report is a misdemeanor offense under Georgia law. You do not need proof — you need only reasonable suspicion.

What Is a Mandated Reporter?

A mandated reporter is any individual who, by law or organizational policy, is required to report known or reasonably suspected child abuse or neglect to the appropriate authorities. At New Vision Youth & Community Services, this designation applies to every volunteer — regardless of role, tenure, or whether abuse occurred on organizational premises.

Types of Abuse & Neglect to Report

Volunteers must report any reasonable suspicion of the following:

Type	Examples / Indicators
Physical Abuse	Unexplained bruises, burns, fractures, welts, or injuries; inconsistent explanations for injuries; visible signs of physical harm.
Emotional Abuse	Persistent verbal degradation, humiliation, threats, rejection, or withholding affection in a manner that harms a child's emotional development.
Sexual Abuse	Disclosure by the child; age-inappropriate sexual knowledge or behavior; unexplained physical symptoms; avoidance of specific adults.
Neglect	Consistently inadequate food, clothing, hygiene, or supervision; untreated medical conditions; chronic absenteeism or homelessness.
Human Trafficking Indicators	Youth who appear controlled by another adult; signs of physical abuse combined with evidence of commercial sexual exploitation; youth who cannot speak freely, avoid eye contact, or appear fearful.

How to Report

33. **Internal Report First:** Immediately notify your direct supervisor or a senior staff member. Do not delay notifying authorities while waiting for an internal response.
34. **Report to Authorities:** Contact the Georgia Division of Family and Children Services (DFCS) Statewide Child Abuse Hotline.
35. **Document:** Record exactly what was observed, said, or disclosed — using the child's own words where possible — and submit a written account to your supervisor.

Georgia DFCS Child Abuse Hotline

1-855-GACHILD (1-855-422-4453)

Available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year.

Georgia law reference: O.C.G.A. § 19-7-5

What to Document

- Date, time, and location of the observation or disclosure.
- Exact statements made by the child (use their words, not interpretations).

- Physical observations (appearance, injuries, demeanor).
- Names of any witnesses present.
- Actions taken and by whom.

Critical Reminders

- **Do not conduct your own investigation.** It is not your role to determine whether abuse occurred — only to report your reasonable suspicion. Let trained authorities handle the investigation.
- **Do not confront the alleged abuser.** This can compromise official investigations and place participants at risk.
- **Do not promise confidentiality** to a participant who begins to disclose. Gently let them know you care about their safety and may be required to tell another adult who can help.
- **Non-Retaliation:** No volunteer will be penalized, dismissed, or treated adversely for making a good-faith report of suspected abuse or neglect.

Section 7 — Communication Rules

Clear, appropriate, and transparent communication is essential to maintaining safety and professionalism in a youth-serving environment. All volunteer communication — whether with participants, families, or colleagues — must comply with the standards set forth in this section.

Approved Communication Channels

- All communication with program participants must occur through **officially approved organizational channels** only (e.g., organizational email, approved group messaging platforms designated by program staff).

- Volunteers must not use personal phone numbers, personal email addresses, or personal social media accounts to communicate with participants or their families.
- If an organizational communication platform is not yet set up for your role, consult your supervisor for approved interim methods.

Digital Communication Standards

- **No private one-on-one digital messages with minors** — all digital communication with youth participants must take place in a group setting that includes a staff member or supervisor.
- All written communication with participants must be documented and copied to a designated program supervisor.
- Text messages, emails, or messages sent through approved platforms should be professional in tone, age-appropriate in content, and limited to program-related matters.
- Do not communicate with participants outside of approved hours without staff authorization.

No Personal Contact Information Exchange

Volunteers must never exchange personal phone numbers, personal email addresses, home addresses, or personal social media handles with program participants or their family members. All contact must be routed through organizational channels.

Social Media Policy

- Do not "friend," "follow," or send direct messages to any program participant on any personal social media platform.
- Do not post, tag, or share any content that identifies, depicts, or references a program participant without verified written organizational consent.
- Do not make public statements on social media about organizational matters, incidents, or participants.

- Positive, general statements about volunteering with New Vision are welcome, provided no participant identifying information is included.
- If you are unsure whether a social media post is appropriate, consult your supervisor before posting.

Photography & Media Consent

⚠ Written Consent Required

No volunteer may photograph, video record, or capture any likeness of a program participant without verified, written consent on file with the organization. Consent must be confirmed with program staff prior to capturing any images. Unauthorized photography or recording is a serious violation and grounds for immediate dismissal.

Responding to Media Inquiries

- Volunteers must not respond to media inquiries, press questions, or journalist contacts on behalf of New Vision Youth & Community Services.
- All media inquiries must be immediately referred to the Executive Director.
- This policy applies in person, by phone, by email, and through social media channels.

Internal Communication with Staff

- Communicate questions, concerns, or scheduling updates to your assigned supervisor in a timely manner.
- Use professional language and respectful tone in all written and verbal communication with staff.
- Respond to communications from program staff within a reasonable timeframe (typically within 24–48 hours).
- All critical communications (incident reports, safety concerns, scheduling conflicts) should be made as soon as possible — do not delay urgent matters.

Section 8 — Dress Code

The way volunteers present themselves reflects directly on New Vision Youth & Community Services and communicates professionalism to the participants and families we serve. All volunteers are expected to dress in a manner that is appropriate, respectful, and consistent with a professional youth-serving environment.

General Standards

- Clothing must be clean, neat, in good repair, and free of stains or tears.
- Attire must be modest — no excessively revealing clothing including exposed midriffs, low-cut necklines, or shorts that fall above mid-thigh.
- No clothing with offensive graphics, profane language, hate symbols, or imagery promoting alcohol, drugs, or violence.
- Closed-toe shoes are strongly recommended in all program spaces for safety purposes.
- Strong fragrances should be avoided as some participants may have sensitivities or allergies.

Name Badge Requirement

Name Badge Policy

All volunteers must wear their organizational name badge or lanyard in a clearly visible location during every volunteer session. Name badges identify you as an authorized organizational representative and are required for access to program spaces. If you lose or forget your badge, report to your supervisor upon arrival.

Dress Code by Setting

Setting	Appropriate Attire
Regular Programming Days	Business casual or smart casual. Examples: slacks, khakis, polo shirts, blouses, modest skirts, clean jeans (no tears), comfortable flats or sneakers. Organizational branded shirts are encouraged.
Outdoor / Active Events	Comfortable, weather-appropriate activewear that remains modest and professional. Organizational t-shirts, athletic pants or shorts (knee-length minimum). Closed-toe athletic shoes required.
Formal / Fundraising Events	Business professional or business formal. Examples: suits, blazers, dress slacks, professional dresses. Staff will communicate specific dress expectations in advance.
Community Outreach	Business casual minimum. Organizational branded apparel is strongly encouraged to identify volunteers as representatives of New Vision.

Organizational Branded Apparel

When available, volunteers are strongly encouraged to wear New Vision Youth & Community Services branded apparel (t-shirts, polo shirts, lanyards, etc.) during volunteer service. Branded items reinforce organizational identity, foster team cohesion, and make volunteers easily identifiable to participants and community members. Inquire with your supervisor about the availability of branded items.

Non-Compliance

A volunteer who arrives dressed in a manner that does not meet these standards may be asked to change before beginning their service for the day. Repeated non-compliance with the dress code may result in a written warning.

Reliable volunteer attendance is critical to the success of our programs and the wellbeing of the youth we serve. Participants — particularly youth in mentorship programs — build trust and a sense of stability through consistent relationships with volunteers. Chronic absenteeism or unreliability can be deeply harmful to young people who have already experienced instability in their lives.

Scheduled Hours

- Volunteers are expected to honor all scheduled volunteer commitments in full.
- Arrive at the scheduled start time. If you will be late, notify your supervisor as soon as possible.
- Remain for the full duration of your scheduled session unless released early by a supervisor.
- Do not cancel or modify your schedule without notifying your program supervisor in advance.

Absence Notification Policy

- **Minimum 24-hour advance notice** is required for any planned absence.
- Notify your supervisor by phone or through the designated organizational communication channel — do not rely on leaving a voicemail as the sole notification without a follow-up.
- Emergency absences should be reported as soon as reasonably possible, with an explanation provided to your supervisor upon return.
- Supervisor contact information and notification procedures will be provided at the time of orientation.

Chronic Absenteeism & No-Call/No-Show Policy

⚠ No-Call/No-Show Policy

Failing to appear for a scheduled volunteer session without prior notice (a "no-call/no-show") is considered a serious breach of commitment. A first no-call/no-show will result in a documented conversation with your supervisor. A second no-call/no-show may result in written warning or reassignment. A third instance may result in dismissal from your volunteer role.

- Chronic absenteeism (missing 3 or more scheduled sessions within a 60-day period, regardless of notice) will trigger a formal review conversation with the program coordinator.
- Volunteers who are unable to maintain their agreed-upon commitment are encouraged to communicate this proactively rather than continuing a pattern of absences.

Makeup Opportunities

- Makeup opportunities may be available for missed sessions, subject to program needs and supervisor approval.
- Volunteers should proactively request makeup opportunities when appropriate and feasible.
- Makeup sessions do not negate the no-call/no-show record but demonstrate commitment and good faith.

Tracking Volunteer Hours

- All volunteer hours must be logged using the designated hour-tracking method provided at orientation (digital log, sign-in sheet, or organizational platform).
- Accurate hour tracking supports program reporting, grant compliance, and organizational accountability.
- Falsifying volunteer hours is grounds for immediate dismissal.

Extended Leave or Resignation

- Volunteers who need to take an extended break from service (more than two consecutive scheduled sessions) must notify their supervisor in advance and discuss expectations for return.
- Volunteers who wish to resign from their role should provide as much advance notice as possible — a minimum of two weeks is requested and appreciated.
- All organizational property (name badges, materials, equipment) must be returned upon the conclusion of volunteer service.
- Resignations should be communicated in writing to the program supervisor.

Section 10 — Best Practices for Working with Youth

Effective and ethical youth work is both a skill and a calling. The young people served by New Vision Youth & Community Services come to us with diverse backgrounds, experiences, and needs — many of them having faced significant adversity. The following best practices are designed to help volunteers engage with youth in ways that are safe, developmentally appropriate, and truly impactful.

Trauma-Informed Approach

Trauma-informed care recognizes that many young people have experienced adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) including poverty, family instability, violence, loss, or abuse. A trauma-informed volunteer understands that challenging behaviors are often a response to past trauma — not a personal challenge to your authority.

- Approach all behavior with curiosity rather than judgment: ask "What happened to this young person?" not "What is wrong with this young person?"
- Create a predictable, consistent, and calm presence — this itself is healing for youth who have experienced chaos.
- Never shame, embarrass, or belittle a young person, even in response to misbehavior.
- Prioritize emotional safety as much as physical safety.

Building Trust & Rapport

- Be consistent — show up when you say you will, every time.
- Learn and use each participant's name correctly and with care.
- Show genuine interest in their lives, goals, interests, and perspectives.
- Follow through on commitments, no matter how small — trust is built in the details.
- Give youth time to warm up to you — do not rush the relationship-building process.

Strength-Based & Positive Communication

- Lead with what a young person can do, not what they cannot.

- Recognize and celebrate effort, not just outcomes.
- Use affirmative, encouraging language: "I noticed you worked really hard on that" rather than only "Good job."
- Frame challenges as opportunities: "Let's try a different approach" rather than "You're doing it wrong."
- Avoid negative labels such as "troublemaker," "bad kid," or "difficult." Behavior is not identity.

Active Listening Techniques

- Make eye contact and use open, approachable body language.
- Resist the urge to immediately offer solutions — let youth be heard first.
- Reflect back what you hear: "It sounds like you're feeling frustrated about that."
- Ask open-ended questions that invite conversation rather than one-word answers.
- Validate feelings without necessarily agreeing with behavior: "I understand you were angry. Let's talk about what happened."

Age-Appropriate Engagement

Age Group	Engagement Strategies
Elementary (Ages 5–11)	Short-duration activities, hands-on learning, play-based engagement, clear simple instructions, frequent positive reinforcement, structured routines.
Middle School (Ages 11–14)	Peer-inclusive activities, acknowledgment of individuality, respect for growing independence, collaborative projects, avoidance of public embarrassment.
High School (Ages 14–18)	Autonomy-affirming conversations, real-world skill connections, goal-setting discussions, career exploration, peer leadership opportunities, authentic relationship-building.

Cultural Humility & Sensitivity

- Approach every young person with an awareness that your cultural background, experiences, and assumptions may differ significantly from theirs.
- Avoid assumptions about family structure, cultural practices, religious beliefs, or socioeconomic status.

- Educate yourself and remain open to learning — cultural humility is an ongoing practice, not a destination.
- Avoid colloquialisms, idioms, or cultural references that may exclude or confuse youth from different backgrounds.
- If you make a mistake — acknowledge it, apologize sincerely, and do better.

Managing Challenging Behaviors

- **Stay calm.** Your calm demeanor is the most powerful de-escalation tool available to you.
- Lower your voice rather than raising it. Speak slowly and clearly.
- Give the young person space and time — do not crowd or pressure them in moments of escalation.
- Offer choices to restore a sense of control: "Would you like to take a break or try the activity a different way?"
- Remove an audience when possible — public confrontations rarely end well for anyone.
- Involve staff immediately if a situation escalates beyond your comfort level or poses a safety risk.
- **Never physically restrain a youth** — contact staff immediately for any situation requiring physical intervention.

Personal Boundaries in Sharing

- Do not share your personal struggles, relationship issues, financial problems, or emotionally heavy personal history with youth participants.
- Sharing age-appropriate, brief personal experiences to build connection is fine — oversharing personal burdens is not appropriate and can harm the relationship dynamic.
- Your role is to provide support to youth — not to receive it from them.

Consistency as a Tool for Development

- For many youth, inconsistency and unreliability are painful patterns they have already experienced too many times.

- Your consistent presence — showing up, following through, being predictable — is one of the most powerful contributions you can make to a young person's development and sense of worth.
- If you must be absent, communicate this to your supervisor so that youth are informed and not left wondering.

Section 11 — Professional Boundaries

Professional boundaries are the ethical and behavioral limits that define the appropriate scope of the volunteer-participant relationship. Healthy boundaries protect the young people we serve, protect volunteers from ethical missteps, and protect the integrity of our programs. Boundaries are not barriers to caring — they are the framework within which genuine, safe, and lasting care is given.

What Are Professional Boundaries?

Professional boundaries define the difference between a safe, structured helping relationship and an inappropriate personal relationship. They exist to ensure that the power differential between an adult volunteer and a youth participant is never misused — intentionally or unintentionally.

Dual Relationship Awareness

- A "dual relationship" occurs when a volunteer assumes roles outside of their organizational capacity (e.g., becoming a personal friend, surrogate parent, or financial provider to a participant).
- While natural affection for youth develops in this work, the volunteer's role must remain clearly defined as that of a program representative — not a personal figure in the youth's private life.
- If you are unsure whether a relationship has crossed into dual-relationship territory, speak with your supervisor immediately.

Gift-Giving Policy

⚠ Gift Restriction Policy

Volunteers must not give or receive personal gifts to or from program participants or their families. This includes cash, personal items, clothing, food (outside of program-provided items), or gifts of any monetary value. Exceptions may be made for small, pre-approved, group-distributed items (e.g., program incentive prizes) — always confirm with your supervisor in advance.

Off-Site Contact

- Home visits, personal outings, or off-site contact with participants outside of approved organizational activities are strictly prohibited without the explicit written approval of the Executive Director.
- Any approved off-site contact must be documented, include a second screened adult, and have parental/guardian consent.

Social Media Boundaries

- Do not send friend requests, follow requests, or direct messages to participants on any personal social media platform.
- Do not accept follow or friend requests from participants on personal accounts.
- If a participant attempts to contact you via personal social media, notify your supervisor and do not respond.

Physical Contact Guidelines

Appropriate Contact	Inappropriate Contact
Handshakes, high-fives, fist bumps	Kissing, prolonged hugging, or any sexualized physical contact
Brief, side-by-side or shoulder pats initiated by the youth	Sitting a youth on your lap (for youth over age 5)

Appropriate Contact	Inappropriate Contact
Age-appropriate comfort gestures (e.g., brief hug if initiated by youth, in public view)	Tickling, wrestling, or rough physical play
Guiding a youth's hands for an activity (with verbal notice and consent)	Any physical contact the youth is visibly uncomfortable with

When in doubt about the appropriateness of any physical contact, err on the side of no contact. Follow the youth's lead and never initiate physical contact that the youth has not already offered.

Emotional Boundaries

- Care deeply — but do not over-invest to the point where your emotional state becomes dependent on a participant's outcomes or choices.
- Practice "compassionate detachment" — be a consistent, caring presence without taking on the young person's burdens as your own.
- Seek supervisor support or debriefing if you find yourself emotionally overwhelmed by a participant's situation.

When a Participant Discloses Personal Information

- Listen calmly and without visible alarm.
- Do not promise to keep the information confidential if it involves safety concerns.
- Thank the youth for trusting you and let them know you care about their safety.
- Report the disclosure to your supervisor immediately — never attempt to manage or respond to a serious disclosure alone.
- Document the disclosure in writing as soon as possible, using the youth's own words.

Section 12 — Conflict Resolution

New Vision Youth & Community Services is committed to fostering a workplace and volunteer environment characterized by mutual respect, open communication, and healthy resolution of disagreements. Conflict, when handled constructively, can strengthen relationships and improve our work. Our process is designed to be fair, transparent, and restorative.

Organizational Commitment

We believe every member of our team — staff and volunteers alike — deserves to have their concerns heard and addressed fairly. We do not tolerate retaliation against anyone who raises a concern in good faith, and we are committed to resolving conflicts in a manner that preserves dignity and keeps our mission at the center.

Conflict Resolution Process

Step	Action	Responsible Party
Step 1	Direct Communication: When appropriate and safe to do so, the parties involved attempt to resolve the issue directly through respectful, honest conversation.	Parties involved
Step 2	Supervisor Involvement: If direct resolution is unsuccessful or the conflict involves a power imbalance, the volunteer's immediate supervisor or program coordinator is brought in to facilitate.	Program Supervisor / Coordinator
Step 3	Formal Mediation: Leadership facilitates a structured mediation session with all parties present. Agreements reached during mediation are documented in writing.	Leadership / Executive Director
Step 4	Written Grievance: If mediation does not resolve the matter, a formal written grievance may be submitted to the Executive Director for a final organizational determination.	Executive Director

Conflicts Involving Participants

- Any conflict, disagreement, or concerning interaction involving a program participant must be escalated to program staff immediately — do not attempt to resolve participant conflicts independently.

- Do not engage in debates, arguments, or power struggles with youth participants.
- Remove yourself from the immediate situation if needed and notify a staff member.

Anonymous Reporting Option

Volunteers who wish to raise a concern but are uncomfortable doing so through direct channels may submit a concern anonymously. Anonymous reports may be submitted in writing and placed in the designated confidential drop box located at the program site, or submitted via the organizational contact mechanism specified at orientation. Anonymous reports will be taken seriously and reviewed by the Executive Director or their designee.

Non-Retaliation Policy

☒ **Protected Right to Report**

New Vision Youth & Community Services strictly prohibits retaliation against any volunteer who raises a concern, files a grievance, or participates in a conflict resolution process in good faith. Anyone found to have retaliated against a volunteer for raising a concern will be subject to disciplinary action up to and including dismissal.

Section 13 — Dismissal Policy

New Vision Youth & Community Services deeply values every volunteer who serves our mission. However, we are also committed to protecting our participants, our staff, and the integrity of the organization. When volunteer conduct falls below the standards outlined in this handbook, appropriate action — including dismissal — may be necessary.

Grounds for Immediate Dismissal

The following violations will result in immediate dismissal from the volunteer program, without a prior warning process:

- Any form of physical, emotional, or sexual abuse, exploitation, or harassment of a program participant.
- Failure to comply with mandated reporting obligations (failure to report known or suspected child abuse or neglect).
- Violation of the Two-Adult Rule resulting in unauthorized one-on-one contact with a minor.
- Physical violence, threats of violence, or intimidating behavior toward any participant, staff member, or fellow volunteer.
- Unauthorized photography, recording, or sharing of participant images or personal information.
- Engaging in or pursuing any romantic or sexual relationship with a program participant.
- Being under the influence of alcohol or illegal substances while on duty or on organizational premises.
- Theft, fraud, or misuse of organizational resources, funds, or property.
- Providing false information during the volunteer application or background check process.
- Any conduct that poses an immediate risk to the safety and wellbeing of participants or others.
-

🚫 Immediate Dismissal Notice

Grounds for immediate dismissal are treated as serious violations that may also result in reporting to appropriate law enforcement agencies and/or child protective services. The organization reserves the right to take all necessary steps to protect program participants and the community.

Grounds for Dismissal After Warning Process

The following may result in dismissal following the formal warning process outlined below:

- Repeated tardiness or chronic absenteeism after documented warnings.
- Persistent refusal to follow staff direction or organizational policies (insubordination).
- Ongoing boundary violations that do not rise to the level of immediate dismissal but demonstrate a pattern of non-compliance.
- Repeated dress code violations after documented notice.
- Persistent communication policy violations (e.g., repeated attempts to contact participants via personal channels).
- Non-compliance with confidentiality expectations.

Warning Process

36. Verbal Warning: A supervisor communicates the concern clearly and directly to the volunteer.

The conversation is documented in the volunteer's file. The volunteer is given clear expectations for correction.

37. Written Warning: If the behavior continues or a subsequent infraction occurs, a written warning is issued, signed by both the supervisor and the volunteer, and placed in the volunteer's file. The written warning outlines the specific behavior, the expectation for correction, and the consequences for continued non-compliance.

38. Dismissal: If behavior is not corrected following a written warning, or if a further violation occurs, the volunteer will be formally dismissed from their volunteer role. The dismissal will be

documented in writing and communicated to the volunteer by a supervisor or the Executive Director.

Volunteer's Right to Be Heard

Prior to a formal dismissal (in non-immediate cases), the volunteer will be given an opportunity to speak to their supervisor or the Executive Director regarding the matter. The organization is committed to ensuring that the process is fair and that all relevant information is considered before a final decision is made.

Return of Organizational Property

Upon dismissal — for any reason — the volunteer must immediately return all organizational property, including but not limited to: name badges, lanyards, keys, access cards, organizational materials, documents, and any technology provided by the organization. Failure to return organizational property may result in additional action.

Re-Application After Non-Serious Dismissal

Volunteers who are dismissed for non-serious infractions (i.e., reasons that did not involve harm to participants, criminal conduct, or egregious boundary violations) may, at the discretion of the Executive Director, be eligible to re-apply for a volunteer role after a minimum waiting period of twelve (12) months. Re-application does not guarantee reinstatement. Volunteers dismissed for causes involving participant safety, criminal conduct, or serious ethical violations are permanently ineligible to volunteer with New Vision Youth & Community Services.

Section 14 — Volunteer Acknowledgment & Agreement Form

This form must be completed, signed, and submitted to program staff before beginning volunteer service. A signed copy of this form will be retained in the volunteer's permanent file.

Acknowledgment Statement

I acknowledge that I have received, read, and understand the **New Vision Youth & Community Services Volunteer Handbook**. I agree to abide by all policies, procedures, and guidelines set forth in this document. I understand that failure to comply with the standards and expectations outlined in this handbook may result in disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal from my volunteer role. I further acknowledge that certain violations may be referred to appropriate law enforcement or child protective authorities.

Part I — Volunteer Information

Full Name (Print):

Volunteer Role / Position:

Program / Department:

Volunteer Start Date:

Phone Number:

Email Address:

Part II — Volunteer Signature

By signing below, I confirm that I have read this handbook in its entirety and agree to all terms contained within:

Volunteer Signature

Date

Part III — Emergency Contact Information

Emergency Contact Full Name:

Relationship to Volunteer:

Emergency Contact Phone Number (Primary):

Emergency Contact Phone Number (Secondary / Alternative):

Part IV — Staff Witness Acknowledgment

To be completed by an authorized New Vision Youth & Community Services staff member at the time of form submission.

Staff Witness Signature

Date

Staff Name (Print):

Staff Title / Role:

A signed copy of this form will be retained in the volunteer's file. Please retain a personal copy for your records.

New Vision Youth & Community Services

Volunteer Handbook — Effective 2026

"Empowering Communities. Transforming Lives."

This document is confidential and intended solely for use by authorized volunteers of New Vision Youth & Community Services.
