

**Volunteer Guidelines**

Thank you for your interest in joining the Volunteer Family at Harold’s House. Volunteers make an incredible difference in the lives of the children and families who come to Harold’s House. With your help, we can continue to provide services to abused children and their families, which bring comfort in times of crisis and lay a foundation for a healthy future.

**General Information**

Harold’s House is a member of the Children’s Advocacy Centers of Texas, Inc. and the National Alliance for Children. Harold’s House opened in 2003 as a nonprofit organization that provides a child friendly environment for its child clients. Children are referred to Harold’s House by law enforcement officials and Child Protective Services investigators. Harold’s House is a neutral entity, making no recommendations in any case. It simply provides a supportive and nurturing environment in which a child can interact with the necessary agencies. At Harold’s House, the child always comes first.

**Our Mission**

It is the mission of Harold’s House to provide services to abused children and their families, which bring comfort in times of crisis and lay a foundation for a healthy future.

**Volunteer Philosophy**

In order to offer the best services possible to its clients, Harold’s House encourages the teamwork of volunteers and paid staff. Volunteers contribute unique talents and skills to the agency and are a vital part of the center’s success.

**General Qualifications for Volunteers**

* Volunteers working directly with child and families must be at least 18 years of age. Younger volunteers are permitted for general duties.
* Volunteers must successfully pass a CPS and criminal background check. Volunteers MUST notify the agency in the event they are arrested or convicted for a criminal offense since the time of their application. CPS and criminal background checks will be administered every three years.
* Volunteers must submit proof of current automobile liability insurance, as well as a copy of current driver’s license, if they will be using their vehicle for Harold’s House duties (e.g., running errands, picking up fundraiser items, etc.).
* All volunteers must successfully complete an initial orientation provided by Harold’s House.
* Volunteers must successfully complete additional training as required by specific volunteer duties.
* Volunteers must maintain absolute confidentiality at all times. A confidentiality agreement must be signed by the Volunteer prior to attending orientation.
* Volunteers must be willing to work within the guidelines, policies and standards of Harold’s House.
* Volunteers must demonstrate a sincere interest in the work of the center and a willingness to make every effort to work on their scheduled shift.
* Volunteers must be willing to take and follow the directions of center Staff. Suggestions from volunteers are always welcome.
* Volunteers must demonstrate sensitivity to cultural and ethnic differences.
* Volunteers must demonstrate willingness to work as part of a team on behalf of the children served by Harold’s House.
* Volunteers must not be a client or associated with a Harold’s House case in the past 2 years

Volunteers either welcome clients and their non-offending family members to Harold’s House, assist with donations, office work or preparing meals for meetings. Volunteers appropriately interact with families and staff to provide comfort and support while maintaining confidentiality. Volunteers provide supervision for clients of Harold’s House in a fun, child-friendly setting. Orientation and training is required. Volunteers must provide proof of current automobile liability insurance and a current driver’s license, if a licensed driver (if needed). Volunteers must submit to CPS and criminal background checks.   
  
**Volunteer Sign-Up Procedure**

Volunteers sign up to cover “shifts” – times when we have children and families at the center for interviews and/or medical exams. When an interview or medical exam is scheduled for our clients, the forensic staff notifies the Volunteer Services Coordinator, who will then contact the volunteer via email or phone. If you are available to cover the open shift, simply reply to the email and let the Volunteer Coordinator know. As updates to the schedule are made or shifts are filled, the Volunteer Services Coordinator will notify the volunteer via email or phone. Shifts will be assigned on a first come, first served basis.

Please be on time for your scheduled shift. Some shifts may be reduced or cancelled, depending upon special circumstances or changes in our interview schedules. Volunteer who signed up for these shifts will be notified of the cancellation as soon as possible. If you are unable to make your shift, please contact the Volunteer Services Coordinator as soon as possible, so that alternate arrangements can be made. If the Volunteer Services Coordinator is unavailable, please contact the Family Services Coordinator.

**Volunteer Shift Procedure-Family Greeter**  
When you arrive for your shift, please sign in and make contact with either the Family Services Coordinator, Forensic Services Coordinator or Forensic Interviewer.  You will then make sure the playrooms and waiting rooms are ready for clients. **Volunteers may not make non-agency related phone calls while clients are present.**

When clients arrive at Harold’s House, the volunteer will welcome them and show them to their playroom and waiting room. You do not need to stay in the playroom the entire time the clients are at the agency, but you **must** make sure our child clients are **never left unattended**. For example, when CPS and law enforcement speak with parents/guardians in private, it will be your responsibility to supervise the child client(s). Once the child returns to the playroom following the interview/medical, you will continue with supervision until the client(s) leaves the facility.  Please make sure that the client receives a stuffed animal and book before he or she leaves the agency.  Once the client has left, please make sure the playroom and waiting room are straightened and ready for the next client.

**Volunteer Best Practices**

* The parent/guardian or child may have lots of questions.  Be sure to direct their questions to either the Victim Services Coordinator, or Forensic Interviewer. *Please remember that this in an ongoing criminal investigation.*
* Encourage the child to go into the play area and explain that this is a room for kids to play or just relax - it may help to have the caregiver give the child permission to play there.
* Join the child in the play area and follow their lead regarding play activity.
* Approach all children and families with respect.
* It is best to keep your interaction with the clients on a non-verbal level as much as possible.  It is important to remember that children are here as part of an investigation, and speaking with a child about why he or she is at Harold’s House or otherwise engaging in a conversation with the client about his or her abuse, could hinder the investigation.  You do not want to become part of the investigation or be called to testify in court.  Your role as a Family Greeter Volunteer is to provide supervision for our child clients while they are waiting for their interview and after they have completed the interview.
* Remember to smile and acknowledge the family and other agency members.  We want our clients and agency partners to have a positive experience at Harold’s House.
* If a client’s behavior becomes inappropriate or violent, notify the parents/guardians immediately and have them address the problem with the child.  If they refuse or are unable to control the child, then notify the Forensic Interviewer.  **NEVER** raise your voice, yell or scold a child.  *Always ask for help if you have a situation in which you are uncomfortable.*
* If the child attempts to talk to you about why he or she is at Harold’s House, tell him or her to wait until they talk to the Forensic Interviewer. If the child discloses to you any information about the case or abuse, notify the Forensic Interviewer as soon as possible, but without leaving the child unattended.
* Clients and their families may only enter the facility through the front entrance. If the parent(s)/guardian(s) wish to walk outside (i.e. to make a phone call or smoke a cigarette), please escort them through the main entrance.   
  **What NOT To Do**
* Don’t make promises - sometimes we are tempted to make unrealistic promises when we see a child in crisis, but promises we can’t keep may further damage the child’s ability to trust.
* Don’t ask what happened, or talk about any allegations of abuse.
* Don’t approach children abruptly or attempt to hug or touch them - it is okay to hug if they initiate it, but be mindful of the fact that the child may have recently been hurt by touch.
* Don’t force a child to separate from their parent if they are not ready - it may take several attempts before the child is engaged in the playroom.
* Don’t try to influence the child’s play - children, especially abused children, come in many different developmental stages, and should not be made to do “something their age” etc., especially at this time.
* **DO NOT** take the child to the bathroom.  If the child needs to use the bathroom, notify the parents/guardians and have them take the child to the bathroom.  **DO NOT** change diapers - that is the responsibility of the parents/guardians.

**Volunteer Confidentiality Expectations and Rights**

Volunteers shall follow, and are bound by, Harold’s House Confidentiality Policy. Volunteer records shall be bound by the same rules of confidentiality that apply to the records of agency staff. Harold’s House respects the right of confidentiality of all volunteers. Volunteers have the right to know what information is contained in their files. Volunteers also have the right of prior consent regarding the release of information to external sources except for release required by law.

**Volunteer Rules of Conduct and Ethics**

All volunteers of Harold’s House are expected to conduct themselves professionally at all times in order to represent the agency’s image effectively to the public and the community it serves. Volunteers are expected to follow all federal, state and local laws and the Volunteer Code of Ethics, while performing duties for Harold’s House. In addition, all volunteers are expected to follow the direction of supervisory staff.

**Harold’s House Volunteer Code of Ethics**

* Volunteers providing client services shall maintain the client’s interest as their primary responsibility and will maintain high personal and professional standards.
* Volunteers will maintain an attitude of respect, loyalty, patience, integrity, courtesy, tact, and maturity.
* Volunteers should respect the privacy of clients and maintain confidentiality at all times regarding information obtained while providing services. Volunteers will not reveal the name or other identifying information about any client or a case to the outside public.
* Client confidentiality must be maintained throughout the workplace.
* Volunteers may not discriminate against clients or co-workers on the basis of sex, race, age, creed, color, national origin, religion, marital status, disability, sexual orientation, political affiliation or source of income.
* Volunteers may not accept gifts of any kind from clients.
* Volunteers shall avoid dual relationships with clients. Volunteers shall not conduct any relationship with the client, other than that assigned by Harold’s House, or violate position of trust in any manner.
* Volunteers will distinguish clearly in public statements one’s personal views from positions adopted by Harold’s House.
* Volunteers will report to the appropriate agency authority any conflict of interest that may prevent him/her from providing competent services to a client, or be impartial in the treatment of any client.
* Volunteers shall not use tobacco, drugs, alcohol or profanity while volunteering for Harold’s House. The use of physical abuse, verbal abuse, sexual abuse, and/or mental abuse will result in immediate termination.
* Texas State Law requires that all citizens report any suspected abuse or neglect of a child to the Texas Department of Protective and Regulatory Services and law enforcement agency.
* Volunteers recognize their boundaries of competence and provide only those services, and use only those techniques, for which they are qualified by training experiences.
* Volunteers are expected to dress in [casual, business casual, smart casual, business] attire unless the day’s tasks require otherwise. Volunteers must always present a clean, professional appearance. Everyone is expected to be well-groomed and wear clean clothing, free of holes, tears, or other signs of wear above the knee. Clothing with offensive or inappropriate designs or stamps are not allowed. Clothing should not be too revealing. Clothing and grooming styles dictated by religion or ethnicity are exempt. Volunteers may wear Harold’s House T-shirts, or polo shirts as well.

**Any violation of this code may be grounds for removal as a volunteer of Harold’s House.**

**Volunteer Retention and Termination**

Harold’s House will make every effort to utilize all interested volunteers. The agency will comply with all civil rights laws that allow qualified persons an opportunity to volunteer. Harold’s House will provide periodic volunteer trainings, as well as detailed trainings required by specific volunteer duties.

Harold’s House reserves the right to terminate the services of any volunteer who is no longer serving in the best interest of Harold’s House. A Harold’s House volunteer shall not become inappropriately involved in a child’s case by engaging in activities which jeopardize the safety of the child, the integrity of the program or activities which are likely to result in conflict of interest or expose the program or volunteer to criminal or civil liability. Furthermore, failure to meet any of the volunteer qualifications and/or failure to adhere to the Volunteer Code of Ethics will result in the termination of a volunteer.

**Emergencies**  
In the event of an emergency, such as someone who appears threatening or a suspected perpetrator is attempting to come in the agency, notify staff immediately.  If staff is not available, contact 911 immediately.    
  
**Take Care of Yourself!**   
Please share with staff things that are difficult for you, or questions you may have about the process.  Volunteers are a critical part of Harold’s House’s activities, and often the first contact a child and family has with the agency.

**Benefits of Volunteering**

People volunteer with Harold’s House for many reasons, sometimes personal, sometimes professional, but always for a purpose. While volunteers will have unique experiences, depending upon the specific volunteer duties they perform, some of the more common benefits of volunteering for this agency are:

• Gain satisfaction from helping others

• Gain experience working with clients and the community

• Enhance job skills

• Network and make professional contacts

• Meet new people and make new friends

• Give back to the community

Thank you again for your interest in joining the volunteer family here at Harold’s House. We truly appreciate the time and energy you donate to this agency, and we are grateful for your dedication to helping us provide services to abused children and their families in our community. Once you have reviewed this volunteer job description, please sign the attached form and return it to the Volunteer Coordinator. Please keep this volunteer job description with your training materials. If you have any questions, please feel free to ask. Thank you.

I, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, have read and understand the

**Harold’s House Volunteer Job Description**. I acknowledge that my participation is completely voluntary and I can terminate my Volunteer Services at any time.

Signature

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Date