



Stuffed Animals For Emergencies, Inc.

SAFE Chapter Guidelines and Expectations

Thank you so much for your interest in being a chapter member with SAFE! This organization is run entirely by volunteers just like you who make a difference in children's lives by making them feel a little more SAFE with our stuffed animal donations.

Briefly I would like to discuss the guidelines and expectations for being a chapter member. This will better explain what is involved in being a chapter member as well as what you will need to do as a volunteer to maintain your chapter status. If you have any questions at all, please e-mail Jennifer Alloy at:

chapters@safe-inc.org.

1. As a SAFE chapter member, you would be responsible for replying to all e-mail inquiries sent to the e-mail listed on our chapter page **WITHIN ONE WEEKS TIME**. After about a week if the donors do not hear back from you, they will contact me and then I have to try and track you down and that can be very time consuming. Please reply to all inquiries within a week but if for some reason you cannot do this you need to let me know so I can put your chapter on hold on our website (I will temporarily remove your posting from the website). If I put your chapter on hold, you will also need to set up an auto-responder in your e-mail account that will automatically respond to people when they send you inquiries (unfortunately, even if you are on hold you will still receive e-mails from potential donors who have kept your e-mail address from before when you were active or donors you

have spoken with in the past). Most e-mails have an auto-responder system within it so please check your e-mail for directions on how to do this.

2. As a SAFE chapter member, it is your responsibility to find donation locations in your area that the donations you receive can go to. ***In the beginning, I will help you find locations to donate to if you prefer to help get you started.*** There are a lot of tools on the Chapter Supplies page to assist you in this as well, but if you are having trouble please let me know as I can help more. Here is a link to our chapter supplies page along with the username and password to gain access:

http://www.stuffedanimalsforemergencies.org/Chapter_Supplies.html

username: chapterhelp
password: safe2011

If you find you are receiving too many donations and are not finding enough locations to donate to, please let me know and I can put you on hold so you can take some more time to find places to take your donations to. When you are looking for these places to donate to, ***please do not take any donations received through SAFE to organizations that sell our donations.*** One of the reasons we receive a lot of interest concerning SAFE is because we are a better alternative for people to donate their stuffed animals. If they donate their stuffed animals to Goodwill for instance, their donations will be sold and not given directly to children. **ALL DONATIONS RECEIVED THROUGH SAFE GO DIRECTLY TO CHILDREN IN NEED.** So please double check with these organizations before donating any items about this. Again, if you are having problems finding donation locations, please let me know and I can help you.

3. As a SAFE chapter member, it is also your responsibility to make sure the donations you are giving out to children are in the best possible condition, clean and fresh. These donations will be going directly to children and they represent SAFE and what we do. If we donate items to organizations that are not clean and in the best possible condition that could be unsanitary for the children they are donated to and could also compromise our reputation which would limit our ability to help children in need.

Now, depending on your location and the quantity of inquiries you receive, this can take a good amount of time to complete. You are graciously volunteering your time to do this though so I want to make it as manageable as possible. Again, I can always place your chapter on a hold status if you have received a lot of donations and need time to go through them. ***If you do find at any time that this is something you can't or are not willing to do any longer, please let me know ASAP so I can get you off the site.*** Keeping a chapter on the website that is no longer accepting causes a lot of problems so please let me know if you need to stop. I completely understand that this can take a lot of time and people have other things going on in their lives and for many reasons need to stop.

4. You will need to go to our chapter supplies page and download the 'SAFE Guide to Cleaning Stuffed Animals' as well as the other items on this page so you can organize and operate your chapter. If you have trouble downloading anything please let me know. ***Please follow our guidelines as you are going through our donations, cleaning them, etc.*** If you have any questions about this please let me know.

5. As a SAFE chapter member, I will be e-mailing you monthly requesting donation totals you have received the prior month. The total I am looking for is any donations received that are okay to donate back out again. SAFE accepts the following donations (new or gently used):

Stuffed animals, books, blankets, coloring books and crayons, children's clothes, and baby-related items. We do not accept battery-operated stuffed animals, toys, or dolls.

Any donations you had to throw away DO NOT COUNT towards the totals you send me. I give all chapter members ***one month*** to respond to my e-mails requesting donation totals and if I do not hear from you in that time, I will send out another e-mail making sure you are still an active chapter. If I do not hear from you within 14 days of the second e-mail, ***I will automatically take you off the site*** until I do hear from you.

Unfortunately, so many times in the past chapter members have decided to quit and not tell me. In order to make sure all donors are getting active chapter members when they send their e-mail inquiries, I needed to set up a procedure for all chapter members to follow. Again, if there is something going on in your life and you need to close your chapter ***please let me know***. I completely understand this is entirely volunteer and you may

need to stop being a chapter member. I just ask that you let me know so I can remove you ASAP.

6. It is a good idea to set up an auto-responder to your SAFE e-mail. We ask that you respond to all emails within a week but having an auto-responder at least lets them know you have received their email. On the chapter supplies page, I do have something called 'SAFE e-mail responses' which you can use as your auto-responder. You can also customize it to your specific chapter. Please make sure at all times that you are courteous and helpful and that you let potential donors know when you are available. If you need any help with this please let me know.

7. Lastly, at ***no time can you use SAFE to cross sell other business opportunities you may be involved with.*** We have had chapter members in the past post links to other businesses that they have to try to earn some income off of the traffic they get from potential donors. This is not allowed and your chapter will immediately be taken down if this is done. People need to trust SAFE and know that we as volunteers are not taking advantage of them.

Being a SAFE Chapter Member

Lastly, I wanted to give you more of an idea of what running a SAFE chapter is like. Depending on your location in the country, some chapters are busier than others. In general, the larger the city you live near, the more donors you will be in contact with. Many factors contribute though depending on whether there are other chapter members in your area or state and just the general interest in donating in your area.

First, donors will e-mail you requesting to make a donation and you will respond to them via e-mail letting them know how you want them to donate. You can have them mail you the donations, you can meet the donor somewhere to donate (PLEASE DO THIS IN A PUBLIC PLACE, DO NOT GO TO SOMEONE'S HOUSE FOR SECURITY REASONS), or you can have them come to your house to donate if you are comfortable with that. This is completely up to you as the volunteer. You are in control in terms of how the donors are donating and you also have the contact info of all the donors as you are in control of who you are giving your information to.

Once the donations are received, it is your job to go through the donations and separate what you are keeping and what items you are not going to be able to donate. If items are torn, extremely dirty, smelly, etc. and cannot be cleaned and/or repaired in anyway, please throw them out. Then you will proceed to cleaning/freshening up the donations per our SAFE guidelines.

Once the donations are ready to go and you have places lined up to take them, please take them to be donated and keep track of when they are donated and how many are being donated to each donation location so that you can let me know by e-mail when I ask for donation totals each month. There is a spreadsheet that I created to help keep track of this for you on our chapter supplies page.

A Few Bits of Advice

- It is a good idea to set aside a space for your donations while you are going through them (whether that be your garage, an extra room, a basement, etc.) so that you have room to sort the donations as they come in.
- I personally use boxes that are labeled as well to help better organize the donations. I have boxes set up for most major holidays such as Christmas, Easter, Valentines Day, etc. so as I receive donations that are themed for these, I just add to each box and when the holiday comes I can donate those at one time. I also separate based on the places I regularly donate to and the size of the stuffed animals. For instance, smaller stuffed animals (12 inches and under) I donate to police departments, fire departments, ambulances and the military so I separate those out. Any other donations I receive that are not stuffed animals (books, blankets, etc.) are separated as well.
- In terms of how I decide what donations will work for what we do, there are three general categories: Donatable items (those that are in new or like new condition that can be cleaned or freshened up, qualify as a 'comforting' stuffed animal, and are not battery-operated), Non-donatable items (those that are not appropriate for what we do such as stuffed animals that would not be comforting and battery-operated stuffed animals), and stuffed animals that need thrown away (torn, stained, have smells that could not be gotten rid of through washing, older stuffed animals, etc.). Donatable items are the ones that SAFE uses to donate to organizations that can use them to give directly to kids. Non-donatable items need to be given away to places that could

use the items (other non-profits that can use them) or they can go to places like Freecycle.org who do not sell these items. Freecycle.org is an exchange where people try to keep items out of landfills so by making a post that you have these stuffed animals, there may be someone interested in the donation. Again, please make sure wherever you take them, that the donations are not sold.

- Being a SAFE chapter member is something that everyone can get involved in especially children so please get as much help as you can! Some chapter members receive hundreds (and some thousands) of donations a month so please ask for help if you need it. You are only one person and I am sure there are others in your community, family and friends who would love to help.
- If a person or group contacts you saying they would like to do a drive and then donate to you please decide first whether it is something you can handle. I have instructed all groups who do drives on the site to contact a chapter member first BEFORE they do a drive but unfortunately people don't always follow directions. Drives can bring in 100's or 1,000s of donations and you need to have a plan before agreeing to accept the donations. You need to make sure you have the space to hold the donations as you are going through them, the help you need to get them cleaned and out to the locations you take them to already set up or you may end up with a garage full of stuffed animals (I have had this happen to me!). If you cannot take all the donations a group is trying to donate, please talk with them about other options they have such as having them do some of the cleaning themselves and maybe they can take them directly to one of your contacts. Communication is key here though so please keep in contact with the donor and if there is anything I can do please let me know.
- Lastly, keep good records of everything you take in and everything that goes out. Communication is most important to me regarding chapter members as it is a time saver in dealing with the 100s of e-mails monthly that come through the SAFE site.

Thank you so much again for your interest in starting a chapter or if you are a new SAFE chapter member, welcome aboard! You really can help children in emotional or traumatic situations feel a little more SAFE! Thanks for wanting to make a difference!