



Serving the Elderly of St. Gertrude Church and  
the Edgewater Community Since 1986

## **Volunteer Handbook**

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## **Introduction**

Thank you for being a Heart to Heart volunteer. We hope this handbook provides you with the necessary information about the Ministry, its mission, and why the work you do as a volunteer is so important.

The Heart to Heart Volunteer Handbook cannot answer all the questions you might have about the Ministry. We ask you to contact our office at 773.973.5464 with any questions you might have. Our staff will be happy to assist you.

The purpose of this handbook is to help you to feel more comfortable with Heart to Heart and give you a sense of the whole Ministry. We look forward to working with you.

## **About Heart to Heart**

Heart to Heart is a ministry that reaches out to the frail and isolated elderly living in the Edgewater community. Through the work of volunteers this ministry helps maintain the independent lives of elderly in the community. Heart to Heart has at its core a deep respect for the life of the older person, which honors the unique individuality of each person. Heart to Heart chooses to refer to the seniors it serves as *members* of the ministry. You will see *member(s)* used in the sections titled *Volunteer Opportunities* and *Policies and Procedures*.

## **Mission Statement**

Heart to Heart's mission is to provide caring volunteers to assist older adults and enable them to remain independent and connected to our community for as long as possible.

## **History**

In 1986, Father William Kenneally, then pastor of St. Gertrude Church, met with members of the community who were interested in engaging seniors in inter-generational activities. As some activities were explored, the need for an outreach to the homebound elderly also became evident. Karen Ladd became the first coordinator of an outreach program that would link volunteers to the homebound and laid the groundwork for the current ministry.

By 1989, Jody Brower and Mary Ann Collins became coordinators of the ministry and it was named Heart to Heart. At that time, there were about 30 homebound seniors and 20 volunteers. Ms. Collins continued the ministry part-time while she pursued a master's degree in social work. Upon graduation she sought to improve and expand this important outreach.

## **Heart to Heart Today**

Heart to Heart now goes beyond St. Gertrude's parish to the entire Edgewater community. The ministry serves the elderly residing in the following area: Foster Ave. (5200 North) to Devon Ave. (6400 North) and Ravenswood (1800 West) to the Lake Front. Volunteers are recruited from Edgewater congregations and organizations to serve the many needs of its members. While the numbers in the ministry may be expanding, the mission remains the same as it was in 1989 – to reach out to the most frail and isolated elderly.

At Heart to Heart, we recognize the importance of considering the whole person including the emotional, spiritual and physical needs of all individuals. The specific volunteer opportunities are the means to improving the quality of life for the elderly.

*"The greatest poverty is the poverty of love"*

Armond Marquiset

(Founder of Little Brothers Friends of the Elderly)

## **Volunteer Opportunities**

### **Friendly Visitor**

Volunteers are matched with a member on a one-on-one, heart to heart basis for friendship, and as a connection to the larger community. Listening, sharing stories, and laughing are all elements of this activity.

### **Mail Assistant**

Volunteer would be responsible for reading mail, assisting with letter writing, bill paying, picking up mail from mailboxes, and mailing letters and packages.

### **Driver**

This is often the most needed service – a volunteer driver is matched to a member to provide transportation to religious services, doctor and medical appointments, grocery shopping, errands, social events, and other types of appointments. Volunteers can provide transportation on an on-call basis, weekly or monthly.

### **Grocery Shopping**

Volunteers can assist with grocery shopping several ways. You may call the member and get the list over the phone and shop. (This works if a store maintains a credit card number in their system. If you are willing, you can also pay and get reimbursed with a check upon delivery.). You can pick up the member to accompany you and assist in the store, bring home the items, or if a large order, groceries may be delivered.

You can also pick up the member, drive to and drop them off at the store, and then return at a set time for taking the member home. You might also be asked to pick up and deliver groceries from Care for Real, the local food pantry.

### **Leaf and Snow Removal Requests**

Members are advised to call 311 and have their names placed on list for services.

*"It is so reassuring to know that people like you are out there."*

**A new member in the Heart to Heart Program – 4/12/01**

## **Phone Reassurance**

Volunteers can provide reassuring phone calls on a daily, weekly, or bi-weekly basis. These are also called well-being check-ins.

## **Office Assistant**

Volunteer helps with mailings, filing, shredding, or other office tasks.

Volunteering can be more than it appears. While it may seem that you are assisting with only one or two small needs, you are also providing social interaction and emotional support at the same time.

## **Policies and Procedures**

### **Getting Started**

Staff will meet with each potential new member, assess their situation, and orient them to the program.

Each new volunteer will meet with the Director of Parish Social Services for an initial interview and orientation. At that time, you will be asked to fill out an application that includes references. You may take the application home to complete and return as soon as possible. You will be asked to indicate what kind of services you are interested in and when you would be available. We believe that the formation of relationships is the most important goal of Heart to Heart and therefore request that you make a six-month commitment to the program in order to allow time for these relationships to develop.

The director will review your application for processing. If office staff is unavailable, you will be contacted by phone to arrange a training time. Office staff, along with the director, is responsible for coordinating all services by volunteers and all requests from members.

Heart to Heart maintains strict confidentiality of member and volunteer information. As a policy, Heart to Heart, will not give out any of your personal information (phone number, address, etc.) to anyone, including others in the program. If you decide that you would like to give your number to a member, please consult with the director prior to doing so.

Many of our members are homebound and very dependent upon your time. If you are unable to fulfill a commitment on any given day, please notify the director or the office staff and the member as soon as possible. The Heart to Heart office phone number is 773.973.5464. We also ask you to notify the Director promptly if you need to end your volunteer relationship with Heart to Heart.

When you are performing a service for a member, we ask you to call the person the day before to confirm all the details given to you by the office staff (name of person, address, time of pick up, what you are going to do, etc.). If you are visiting, we ask you to call the member before you arrive at his/her home so they can be ready for you. Please be on time and call the Heart to Heart office if you will be late.

### **Member Confidentiality**

We have an obligation to the people we serve to maintain their confidentiality and to respect their privacy. Every individual served by Heart to Heart has the right to confidentiality. However, at the same time, every volunteer must use his/her best judgment. If you are aware of an issue that requires immediate help, please inform the director.

As you work with a member, sensitive or confidential information may be shared with you. Please do not share this information with anyone who does not need to know. Such information is not to be shared with your family, friends, neighbors, or acquaintances, but only with the director.

### **Gifts**

As a matter of policy, we do not accept gifts from the people we serve. However, we do recognize that they may have a need to express their appreciation and may offer a token of gratitude. We expect any monetary gifts to be contributed back to the Heart to Heart program. In addition, if anyone offers you a gift of significant value, please consult with the director.

As a volunteer, you may form a special friendship with a member and wish to give the member a gift. This is especially true during holidays. We ask that you keep the cost to a minimal amount. We do not want the member embarrassed or feeling the need to reciprocate. If not sure what to do, please call our office for advice.

## **Use of Vehicle**

Volunteers must use every safety precaution, including using seat belts and providing appropriate assistance to the member. Volunteers are required to have a valid driver's license and are responsible for insuring their vehicle. You will be asked to provide a copy of your current driver's license and insurance card.

Volunteers incur the same responsibility when driving a member that they would have if they were giving a friend or family member a ride in their car. This is a risk that volunteers accept or do not accept on an individual basis.

## **Volunteer Support**

We recognize that your time and work are the essence of the Heart to Heart Ministry and it is our goal to support you in any way we can. Please feel free to consult with the director.

You will be invited to attend training sessions when held. Topics usually focus on the needs of the aging population in our society. During your service, if you feel you need training or advice on a particular topic, please let us know. This need may turn into a training session for all of your peers.

As a volunteer, you will also be invited to attend our annual Volunteer Appreciation event (when scheduled) so that you may be honored by us for the service you give to our members.

## **Program Requirements**

The Heart to Heart Ministry over the years has received support from many sources - St. Gertrude Church, the City of Chicago Department of Family and Support Services, and grants. Presently, support is provided by St. Gertrude Church, fundraising events, and private donations.

You are asked to report to us monthly volunteer hours completed. Hours can be reported in several ways – by calling our office at 773.973.5464, by mailing or emailing your report, or in person at our office. This information is used to secure funding and maintain standards.

## **Please Contact the Director ...**

- Anytime you are unable to locate a member for more than 24 hours. (Allow even less time for members you know are homebound.)
- Anytime a member has a problem that you cannot handle.
- Anytime you notice that the member's condition is deteriorating, i.e., physical immobility, personal appearance, change in mental status.
- Anytime the two of you are having difficulty getting along.
- Anytime there is a major change in the member's situation, i.e., he/she moves, begins seeing family members regularly, another person seems to be influencing a member or taking advantage, etc.
- Anytime you have a question about visiting or just want to discuss the member you visit.
- Anytime you have a suggestion for a volunteer training topic.
- Anytime there is a change in your situation that will affect your commitment to Heart to Heart – moving, changing jobs/hours, returning to school, family issues, etc. Please remember to call our office as soon as possible if you will have to stop visiting for any reason.
- Anytime a member requests services which are beyond the duties that you have agreed to do.



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### Staff/Intern/Volunteer Hours Reporting Log

Staff/Intern/VolunteerName \_\_\_\_\_

Month and Year: \_\_\_\_\_

<u>Date of Service</u>	<u>Senior's Name</u>	<u>Service Activity</u>	<u>Total Time</u>
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*Please report time in increments of 15 minutes and include commuting times to and from locations. Also please include time used for phone calls. Hours may be reported by mailing form to office at the end of each month, by e-mail or by calling the office.*

*Thank you for your gift of time.*