



Ohio Victim Witness Association
Volunteer Handbook

DEAR VOLUNTEER,

Ohio Victim Witness Association is delighted that you are willing to share your time, talents, and energy with OVWA. As a burgeoning non-profit, our programs will be greatly enriched through your participation and commitment.

As a volunteer, you are a valuable member of the OVWA team! Your contributions help OVWA continue our mission throughout the state of Ohio in many different ways. Please know that your assistance will make a great difference!

Ohio Victim Witness Association was founded by and has been led by volunteers since 1978 and we are so glad that the tradition of volunteerism continues. We depend on our volunteers to help with OVWA's visibility and services across the State of Ohio.

We are so pleased that you have chosen to volunteer with OVWA and we hope to help make your experience rewarding.

THE STAFF & BOARD OF OVWA

HISTORY OF OVWA

Ohio Victim Witness Association was created in the summer of 1978 and was known as “Ohio Association of Victim Witness Divisions”. The members consisted of county prosecutor office based crime victim advocates. These advocates realized that they could be more powerful together than separately and sought to improve the rights and services of crime victims across the State of Ohio.

These meetings started out small. The first formal meeting was held on October 3rd, 1978. This meeting began a tradition of holding monthly OVWA meetings where members would hold a meeting and also have a training in the afternoon. The training at this meeting was, “How to Find Funding Sources for Victim Services.” Their primary priorities were to:

- Locate and promote funding to establish and maintain state victim advocacy programs
- Network and share for informational purposes
- Discover and address certain issues that are relevant to victims and witnesses of all crimes
- Promote and professionalize the field of victim advocacy
- Establish procedures for consistent quality victim services

On February 20th, 1979, four long range goals were adopted. They were:

- To create and/or secure continual and permanent funding for Victim Witness Divisions in Ohio’s counties
- Broaden Ohio’s Crime Compensation Guidelines
- Explore statuses regarding the return of property being held as evidence prior to trial
- Enlist the support of Senators for development of victim witness causes and goals.

OVWA has been especially active in legislative efforts throughout its years. Because of OVWA’s dedicated members and relentless efforts, Ohio crime victim agencies now have access to the State Victim Assistance Act (SVAA) for funding and now have a permanent seat on the Ohio Attorney General’s SVAA Advisory Board. OVWA members have provided insight and testimony for many pieces of legislation including, but not limited to, the Crime Victim Bill of Rights instated in 1984. OVWA members were key in collaborating with the Ohio Attorney General to develop an annual statewide victim advocacy conference, “Two Days In May”. OVWA also began professionalizing the field and initiated standards for crime victim services through the development of the Ohio Advocate Network and the Ohio Crisis Response Team.

The Ohio Advocate Network became the framework upon which the National Advocate Credentialing Program (NACP) was formed under the National Organization for Victim Assistance (NOVA). NACP then became the basis for the U.S. Department of Defense’s contract with NOVA for the creation of the Department of Defense Sexual Assault Advocacy Credentialing Program (D-SAACP).

In the 1990s, OVWA held annual Victim Rights Week vigils honoring legislators, important laws and victims, analyzed the Victim Compensation program's expenses leading to a faster administrative based process and created the nation's first law permitting a property tax levy for victim services. In the 90s, OVWA also led successful advocacy to obtain \$2.5 million dollars to start up rape crisis centers from "excess" compensation funds. The OVWA President and Public Policy Chair led passage of victim constitutional amendment by a 78% margin.

In the 2000s, OVWA testified to the DNC platform to endorse victim rights constitutional amendment. It should be noted that this was also part of the Republican platform as well. Two OVWA members testified before Congress on U.S. Victim Rights Amendment. In the 2010s, OVWA led change in the Ohio Department of Corrections to elevate victim services to be independent of the Parole Board and its director to be at the Senior Management level.

OVWA is now a statewide victim assistance organization frequently working alongside the Ohio Attorney General, Parents of Murdered Children, ODRC - Office of Victim Services, Action Ohio, Ohio Domestic Violence Network, Ohio Alliance to End Sexual Violence, DWAVE, Ohio Crime Victim Justice Center, OCRT, OAN, MADD, OJACC, the Elder Abuse Commission, and OCJS. These agencies work to keep one another informed, provide network opportunities, and build partnerships to make Ohio's victim services strong. Being involved with the state agencies allows OVWA feedback on pending legislation and remain current on relevant matters enables OVWA to give early input on legislative hearings.

OVWA's future is bright because of the continued support from its members, the Ohio Attorney General, and its staff. OVWA's future goals include becoming an ombudsman for crime victim rights to bring equality to the services provided to those in need. We are so pleased that you have chosen to join us on our new journey that has been decades in the making.

MISSION AND VISION

OVWA is committed to establishing, protecting, and promoting fundamental rights and fair and professional treatment for provision of quality services to victims and witnesses of crime.

YOUR ROLE AS A VOLUNTEER

OVWA has committees that work closely with OVWA leadership, its board, and staff.

Volunteers may request to be a part of one of these committees at any time. They are as follows:

- **Training and Technical Assistance**
 - This committee will work closely with our Programs Coordinator to develop trainings for members, community agencies, and provide technical assistance to these entities as well.
 - Training and Technical Assistance Committee members may also assist the Programs Coordinator in increasing OVWA visibility and membership.

- **Resource Development**

- This committee will work closely with other OVWA members and the Executive Director to help develop, design and implement fundraising efforts alongside OVWA staff. These volunteers bring ideas to the table for effective fundraising, identify potential funding sources, and meet monthly in the most accessible way for all members.
- Public Policy
 - This committee monitors public policy on a state and federal level and works with OVWA's staff to implement strategies that may affect public policy.
 - This committee is very important as these policies will steer OVWA's priorities when it comes to ensuring standards of practice for serving victims of crime and ensuring the rights of those victims.

VICTIM BILL OF RIGHTS

While volunteering at OVWA, we encourage you to view the work that you are doing or potential opportunities through the lens of what would best assist crime victim advocates and ultimately victims and witnesses. Our goal is to ensure that crime victim advocates in the county, private, and non-profit sector are all prepared to assist crime victims from all nationalities, backgrounds, races, and creeds. OVWA knows that the better prepared the advocates are, the better the services victims and witnesses will receive to hopefully enable them to create better lives for themselves. Below are Ohio's Victim Bill of Rights and are paraphrased from ORC 2930.

A crime victim has the right to:

- A victim representative
- Have victim rights information given to them by law enforcement
- Receive notice of arrest or detention of offender
- Confer with the prosecution and to receive notice of legal proceedings
- Report injuries to the prosecutor
- Have their personal identification protected
- Receive notification of any substantial delays in prosecution
- Have minimized contact and separate waiting areas between the victim/witness and the offender
- Receive personal property retained for evidence
- Receive notification of the defendant's acquittal or conviction
- Option to give a victim impact statement
- Receive notification of appeal
- Receive notification of offender incarceration and release date
- Make a statement prior to the offender's release, either judicial or early
- Not receive discipline by any employer to attend court hearings
- Receive protection of rights by the prosecutor

VOLUNTEER RESPONSIBILITIES

We ask that OVWA volunteers make a commitment to volunteer for a minimum of six months or a commitment to 50 service hours. Under federal law, your time can be counted towards our in-kind match for our grants. So, we really mean it when we say that your time is valuable!

Record Management

Each volunteer will be provided with a hard copy and a fillable PDF of OVWA's Volunteer Timesheet. This timesheet is to be completed monthly and then sent to the Executive Director at the end of every month if the volunteer has clocked any time. Volunteers can send their timesheets to the below contact:

Liz Poprocki

Executive Director

liz@ovwa.org

Fax – (614) 396-8863

Dress Code

Volunteers are considered representatives of OVWA and are responsible for presenting a positive image to constituents and to the community. Volunteers will dress appropriately for the conditions and performance of their duties. Volunteers may serve in a capacity of a presenter, speaker or other face-to-face constituent contact and may wear an OVWA name-tag. Volunteers who work in support in an office situation will dress according to the code of the office which is casual. Individual volunteers will be informed of the dress standard for their duties at the time of assignment. Personal appearance must be reflective of the professional environment in which you volunteer. In general, volunteers are held to the same expectations as employees.

Supervision

Volunteers are under the supervision of the Executive Director or his/her/their designee. Volunteers function under the supervision of a designated staff person or designated OVWA member in the area where they volunteer.

Volunteer Attendance

Volunteer attendance is important to the operation of each program. Volunteers should notify the chair of their committee or the Executive Director in advance if they are unable to be present for their volunteer duties. Time not accounted for is the responsibility of the volunteer.

Extra Volunteer Shifts

We appreciate volunteers wanting to volunteer for extra duties. Requests are often posted on our social media Facebook page and to our member listserv. Please follow us on social media and watch for these postings. Your help with these activities is greatly appreciated. If you would like extra duties in your chosen/assigned area, please inform the chair of that committee, designated staff or OVWA member so that we can make sure your talents are utilized to the fullest.

Holidays

OVWA observes all the major holidays – New Year’s Day, Memorial Day, Independence Day, Labor Day, Thanksgiving Day, and Christmas. OVWA also observes the day after Thanksgiving. Volunteers are not required to work on those days and we do not encourage work on these days as we believe that these are wonderful times to spend with friends, family, and to take a moment for yourself.

Use of OVWA Equipment & Cell Phones

OVWA requests that volunteers use their personal cell phones and computers to conduct OVWA business if necessary unless given access to OVWA owned cell phones and/or equipment. OVWA volunteers will be responsible for the well-being and care of such equipment if they are entrusted to use it. Please contact the designated OVWA member, staff, or committee chair if there is an issue with the equipment you are using.

Change of Contact Information

It is the responsibility of the OVWA volunteer to notify OVWA staff of changes to their contact information.

Resignation

If you are no longer able to volunteer, please contact the chair of the committee you serve on or OVWA staff to give notice of your resignation. It is preferred that this resignation be given after you have completed your agreed upon duties. We welcome your feedback to improve our volunteer program. Please let the chair or an OVWA staff member know if there are ways in which your experience could have been improved.

Disciplinary Action

OVWA reserves the right to reassign or dismiss volunteers when such action is in the best interest of the volunteer and/or the organization. Reasons for dismissal include, but are not limited to:

- Inappropriate use of confidential information
- Failure to follow the dress code
- Misconduct or insubordination
- Volunteering under the influence of drugs and/or alcohol
- Failure to satisfactorily perform assigned duties
- Possession of a firearm in the OVWA offices or assigned environments
- Inappropriate use of phones and/or computers
- Theft
- Creating a disturbance on OVWA premises, at sponsored activities, or in areas which could jeopardize the safety of others

Reasonable Accommodations

Ohio Victim Witness Association recognizes and encourages diversity. It is the policy of Ohio Victim Witness Association to provide reasonable accommodations for qualified individuals with disabilities. Volunteers are responsible for requesting an accommodation under this policy. Ohio Victim Witness Association will provide reasonable accommodations for the known disability of a volunteer if requested unless the accommodation would either impose an undue hardship on Ohio Victim Witness Association's business or change the essential functions of the position and/or job description. Requests for reasonable accommodations shall be made to the Executive Director or his/her/ their designee.

Discrimination

Ohio Victim Witness Association prohibits discrimination and/or harassment that is sexual, racial, or religious, in nature or is related to a person's actual or perceived gender, national origin, race, age, sexual orientation, disability, religion/spiritual identity, or veteran's status. This policy applies to all employees and all volunteers of the organization and protects all individuals served by the organization in addition to those employed by or volunteering with Ohio Victim Witness Association. If an employee or volunteer feels they have been subjected to any form of harassment and/or discrimination, the employee or volunteer is encouraged to report it to their supervisor for resolution. If the employee or volunteer does not wish to report this information to the supervisor, they may report it to the President of the Board. Management will take the necessary steps to conduct an investigation in a confidential manner. A timely resolution of the complaint shall be communicated to the employee and relevant other parties involved. Appropriate disciplinary action up to and including termination will be taken promptly against any employee or member of the organization engaging in discrimination and/or harassment.

Retaliation against any employee or volunteer for filing a complaint or participating in the investigation is strictly prohibited.

Smoking

OVWA intends to provide a safe and healthy environment. Smoking in the workplace is prohibited except in outside locations specifically designated as smoking areas. For information regarding the location of smoking areas, consult your supervisor.

Code of Conduct and Conflict of Interest

Employees and volunteers of the organization are expected to use good judgment, abide by high ethical standards and avoid situations that create actual or perceived conflict between their personal interests and those of the organization. Employees and volunteers will disclose real or perceived conflicts of interest and recuse themselves from any interactions that may further present a conflict of interest.

Employees and volunteers of the organization, regardless of being credentialed or not, are expected to follow the Code of Ethics set forth by the Ohio Victim Witness Association (OVWA) and the National Organization for Victim Assistance (NOVA). OVWA employees and volunteers are required to operate in compliance with HIPAA regulations in its handling of personal health information of the consumers that it serves.

Workplace Violence and Weapons

Ohio Victim Witness Association strictly prohibits workplace violence, including any act of intimidation, threat, harassment, physical violence, verbal abuse, endangerment of, aggression or coercion against a coworker, volunteer, vendor, customer, or visitor. Prohibited actions, include, but are not limited to the following examples:

- Physically injuring another person
- Threatening to injure another person
- Engaging in behavior that subjects another person to emotional distress
- Using obscene, abusive or threatening language or gestures
- Bringing an unauthorized firearm or other weapon onto agency property
- Threatening to use or using a weapon while on agency premises, on agency-related business, or during job-related functions
- Intentionally damaging property

All threats or acts of violence should be reported immediately to your supervisor or venue security personnel. Volunteers should warn their supervisors or security personnel of any suspicious workplace activity that they observe or that appears problematic. Volunteer reports made pursuant to this policy will be kept confidential to the maximum extent possible.

Ohio Victim Witness Association will not tolerate any form of retaliation against any volunteer for making a report under this policy. Ohio Victim Witness Association will take prompt remedial action, up to and including immediate dismissal, against any employee or other volunteer found to have engaged in threatening behavior or acts of violence. No volunteer of Ohio Victim Witness Association shall possess firearm or other weapon in the OVWA workplace or while in the course of the volunteer's duties. Volunteers shall not bring firearms or other weapons on to the work site unless sanctioned by the Executive Director.

Drug & Alcohol Use

It is the policy of Ohio Victim Witness Association to have volunteers be aware of the dangers of drug abuse in the workplace and the requirement of all volunteers to maintain a drug free workplace.

Volunteers are prohibited from unlawfully manufacturing, distributing, dispensing, possessing, or using alcohol or a controlled substance in the workplace unless prescribed by a board certified physician for health concerns.

Volunteers are required to report to work in a fit condition to perform their duties. If a volunteer reports to work under the influence of alcohol or other drugs not prescribed by a physician, it will be considered a violation of this policy and the employee will be subject to disciplinary action up to and including termination.

A volunteer is required to notify the OVWA Executive Director within five days after he/she/they is convicted of a violation of any federal or state criminal drug statute where such violation occurred at the workplace or any other location where official business is conducted.

OVWA has an obligation to notify U.S. government agencies with which it has contracts or grants within ten days after receiving notice from the volunteer or otherwise actual notice of such conviction. Any volunteer who fails to report such a conviction will be subject to immediate dismissal. Within thirty days of such notification, the Executive Director will be required to take disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

Social Media and Networking

Ohio Victim Witness Association recognizes the importance of the internet and social media in shaping public thinking about the organization, encouraging discussion related to the organization's mission, and fostering current and future potential services and relationships. These guidelines will help you pursue respectful and knowledgeable interaction.

- 1) Only those officially designated by the Executive Director or his/her/their designee have the authority to speak on behalf of the organization.
- 2) If volunteers make personal comments about any aspect of the organization's business, their profiles must carry a disclaimer that the views expressed are their own and not the organization. For example, "The views on this site are my own and don't necessarily represent those of OVWA."
- 3) Volunteers are prohibited from bullying, harassing, and discriminating against other volunteers, OVWA staff, and OVWA members and any that they may encounter in their work with OVWA while at work and when posting information on social networking websites, including but not limited to information provided via pictures, blogs, comments, videos and messaging.
- 4) Volunteers shall not share information about the organization that is confidential and proprietary. This includes company logos, trademarks, finances, strategy, and any other information that has not been publicly shared.
- 5) Volunteers shall not name, reference or cite organization clients, or the agencies which contract with and/or provide grants to the organization without their express consent.
- 6) Volunteers shall not attempt to access other social networking sites by using a false identity.

Personal Property

Employees should use their discretion when bringing personal property into the workplace. Ohio Victim Witness Association assumes no risk for any loss or damage to personal property.

Safety and Liability

OVWA aims to provide a safe and healthy environment for all volunteers. If a volunteer is injured in the course of the volunteer's service, it is important that the volunteer notify their supervisor immediately. Volunteers should also complete an incident report and submit the report to the volunteer's supervisor. OVWA does not provide coverage to volunteers for liabilities that they may have incurred by their own actions. In some instances, volunteers may need to sign a release absolving OVWA of liability when OVWA volunteers voluntarily and knowingly subject themselves to certain risks while performing volunteer services on behalf of OVWA.

Reimbursement of Expenses

Volunteers may be eligible for reimbursement of pre-approved, actual out-of-pocket expenses, including transportation expenses, incurred while engaging in volunteer services for OVWA. Upon the approval of a supervisor, volunteers need to track and submit receipts for all actual out-of-pocket expenses for which they seek reimbursement. Completed reimbursement forms should be included with the receipt and then given to the Executive Director for reimbursement. Reimbursement for travel to and from volunteer service via motor vehicle is based on mileage and the standard rate per mile, \$0.52.

Emergency Closings

OVWA strives to ensure the safety of all volunteers. In the event of inclement weather, volunteers will be responsible for contacting their volunteer site to inform their supervisor that they will not be performing their scheduled service. If the OVWA main office should close, the Executive Director or his/her/their designee will contact volunteers and notify them of the closing.

Grievance Policy

Any volunteer who has a grievance should report the incident to the Executive Director or the governing board/EEO/ADA Officer.

Any managerial or supervisory employee/OVWA member/volunteer who receives a report of discrimination or harassment must immediately report such complaint to the agency EEO/ADA Officer. While the report cannot be kept strictly confidential, the information concerning the allegations shall be communicated to others only as necessary to investigate and take appropriate disciplinary action.

Ohio Victim Witness Association will promptly investigate all complaints of discrimination, retaliation, harassment or sexual harassment. Findings of discriminatory behavior, retaliation, harassment or sexual harassment will result in disciplinary action against the offending employee up to and including termination of employment. Following are the guidelines for handling a complaint of discrimination, harassment, or retaliation:

- 1) Report the incident to the EEO/ADA officer or trusted supervisory staff.
- 2) If you report to OVWA staff who are not the EEO/ADA Officer, that staff member must immediately report the incident to the agency EEO/ADA officer.
- 3) The EEO/ADA Officer, or person receiving the report of discrimination, will inform the Executive Director within one business day of receiving the report.
- 4) The Executive Director will designate an investigation of the allegation. He/She/They may appoint a management representative to conduct the investigation. All volunteers are required to cooperate with the investigating manager.
- 5) The management representative will write a report to the Executive Director with a summary of what investigative steps were taken and its findings.
- 6) The Executive Director will receive the report of the investigation and will take appropriate action, including discipline, if necessary. All allegations and findings of the investigation will be kept confidential to the fullest extent possible.

There shall be no retaliation against a volunteer for reporting allegations of discrimination or harassment or other inappropriate behavior.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT AND RECEIPT OF VOLUNTEER HANDBOOK

All volunteers of Ohio Victim Witness Association will receive and must read and sign the Receipt of the Volunteer Handbook. This will be returned to the Executive Director or their designee for placement in the volunteer's personal file.

I acknowledge that I have received a copy of the Ohio Victim Witness Association Volunteer Handbook. I agree to read it thoroughly and to talk with my supervisor if I have questions or need clarification on any policy in this manual.

I understand that the terms and conditions of my volunteer time.

I understand that anything contained in this handbook is subject to review and/or revocation by the Executive Director and the Governing Board of Ohio Victim Witness Association. I also understand that nothing contained in this handbook may be construed as creating a promise of future benefits or a binding contract with Ohio Victim Witness Association or any other purpose.

Date: _____

Volunteer Signature: _____

Volunteer Print Name: _____

Received By: _____

Date: _____

OVWA Contacts

Liz Poprocki, Executive Director

liz@ovwa.org

Phone – (614) 787-9001

Fax – (614) 396-8863

Janet Doolan, Programs Coordinator

janet@ovwa.org

Phone – (614) 787-9000

Fax – (614) 396-8863

Mark Weiner, OVWA Executive Board President

mweiner@lcounty.com

Phone – (740) 404-4445

Stefani Payton, OVWA Executive Board Vice-President

Stefani.payton@fayette-co-oh.com

Teri LaJeunesse, OVWA Executive Board Member and Past President

TLaJeunesse@co.greene.oh.us

Phone – (937) 562-5087

Jane McKenzie, OVWA Executive Board Secretary

jmckenzie@franklincountyohio.gov

Phone – (614) 530-7210

Stefanie Day, OVWA Executive Board Treasurer

stefday@dwaveohio.org

David Voth, OVWA Executive Board Member

vothdavid@aol.com

Virginia Beckman, OVWA Executive Board Member

vbgenesishouse@gmail.com