



Volunteer Information Handbook

**Adopted October 2016
Amended May 2019**

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Thank you for volunteering with Houston Oasis!

Our community could not operate without the assistance of committed volunteers. Volunteers contribute over 400 hours of service every week and play a key role in helping us fulfill our mission. As we grow and evolve our operations, it is crucial that we continue to promote a favorable and lasting impression of Houston Oasis in the minds of everyone with whom we interact, including guests, donors, media, volunteers and the general community. Our volunteers are important to us and we ask for your help to create a safe and meaningful volunteer experience. With that, all volunteers must review and acknowledge receipt of our organization policies and processes. We greatly appreciate your service!

About This Handbook

This handbook is designed to introduce you to Houston Oasis and to provide a basic overview of the policies and procedures that provide all of us guidance and direction. As a volunteer, you are expected to abide by the Houston Oasis Code of Conduct, the Volunteer Code of Conduct, Facebook Code of Conduct, and any other policy, procedure, or provision contained in this handbook.

As our organization grows and changes, there will be a need to modify policies, practices and other information in this handbook. When modifications occur, Houston Oasis will do its best to inform all volunteers by announcement at a weekly gathering, via email, or by updates posted in the private Facebook group or the website. It is your responsibility to stay informed about policies and changes that affect you.

If you have any questions or need any clarification of the information contained in this handbook, please contact the Community Engagement Coordinator.

Who We Are

Oasis is a place for the non-religious to come together to celebrate the human experience.

We understand that vibrant communities are central to human happiness and well-being. That's why we need Oasis: to provide a place for like-minded individuals and families to connect, be inspired and feel empowered. Every Sunday morning, we offer the chance to get together to discuss real-world principles supported by evidence and free thought, not scripture or revelation. Furthermore, we provide a place where your children can explore their developing world views, ask questions and make friends in an environment that's supportive of critical thinking.

Our Mission

To cultivate a secular alternative to faith based community that provides opportunities for education, community, and human empowerment.

Our Values

Our Oasis Values define our community and help shape our interactions with each other, society, and the world:

- People are more important than beliefs.
- Reality is known through reason.
- Meaning comes from making a difference.
- Human hands solve human problems.
- Be accepting and be accepted.

Volunteer Policies and Procedures

Attendance and Absenteeism

In your capacity as a volunteer, we depend on you to complete the shifts that you have agreed to work. We do understand that, from time to time, certain situations may arise that prevent you from doing so. In the event of an unscheduled absence—illness or emergency—please alert the appropriate Coordinator as soon as possible, preferably 24 hours before your scheduled shift begins.

Standard of Appearance

We want our volunteers to reflect the positive image of our community as a whole. Please use your best judgement in selecting clothing appropriate for the task for which you are volunteering. If you will be working with young children, please avoid wearing jewelry or other items that might present a choking hazard.

Volunteer Files

Houston Oasis may maintain volunteer files containing basic contact information and records about a volunteer's service. Any volunteer file is confidential and can only be reviewed by the volunteer, the Board of Directors, the Executive Director, and the Community Engagement Coordinator.

Problem-Solving Procedure

When a group of people work and volunteer together, problems may arise. It is important to all of us that such problems are solved as quickly as possible. Occasionally, however, it may be necessary to investigate certain problems in greater detail. Our problem-solving procedure provides you with the opportunity to have a review of any problem, dispute or misunderstanding that arises during the course of your volunteering.

- In situations where differences arise between volunteers or volunteers and staff, it is advised to first try to resolve these differences amongst the parties involved.
- Due to the high potential for misunderstandings and violations of confidence, social media is not the appropriate avenue for addressing differences between individuals or concerns or with the operation of Houston Oasis. Volunteers should refrain from posting about such topics on Facebook, Twitter, or elsewhere. Please take your concern or grievance to the appropriate member of the leadership team or to a board member directly.
- If the parties involved are not able to resolve their differences, either party may inform the Board to request assistance in reaching an immediate resolution. Under no circumstances shall differences be made known or involve other members of the organization during a volunteer event.
- If the grievance is in regard to the Community Engagement Coordinator, the Executive Director or Board of Directors should be contacted.
- If the grievance is in regard to a Board of Director or Executive Director, the Executive Director or another Board of Director should be contacted.

Disciplinary Practices

Any or all of the following measures may be employed in response to a volunteer failing to fulfill his or her responsibilities. Any such action will be at the sole discretion of Houston Oasis:

- Oral warning with documentation in the volunteer file
- Written warning to individual and copy to volunteer file
- Termination/Dismissal

Houston Oasis may employ the above measures based on cumulative infractions, regardless of whether the infraction is of the same general nature as a previous warning.

Dismissal

Dismissal of a volunteer may take place if a volunteer is unreliable, irresponsible, disruptive, demonstrates inappropriate behavior, or fails to adhere to the Houston Oasis Code of Conduct or the policies and procedures contained in this handbook. Dismissal of a volunteer is a serious consequence and may only be imposed by the Executive Director and/or the Board of Directors.

Childcare Program

In conjunction with our Sunday Gathering events, Houston Oasis offers a Childcare Program that includes children of varying ages. We are committed to ensuring that our program provides a safe and secure environment that allows for fun and educational activities. We take this commitment seriously and we expect the volunteers to strictly adhere to the following provisions:

- All volunteers for the youth program must periodically undergo a background check paid for by Houston Oasis.
- If the bathroom is not within the child care area, all children will be escorted to the bathroom. Children requiring assistance in the restroom may be accompanied by a volunteer unless the parent or guardian of the child requests otherwise.
- Volunteers will not change diapers, training pants, or clothing of children. They will text the parents or ask a board member/volunteer to find them in the main room.
- Childcare Program volunteers should take care never to touch a child in an inappropriate way. This includes touching any private areas on a child's body, kissing or giving unsolicited hugs, as well as touching, rubbing, patting, or squeezing a part of a child's body for more than a brief moment. Children have the right to receive or refuse a hug or touch, and are encouraged to report any touch that makes them uncomfortable. Any volunteer seen or reported touching a child inappropriately will immediately be dismissed until an investigation of the incident is conducted.
- Under no circumstances will an Oasis volunteer strike a child or employ any other means of physical/corporal punishment.
- When speaking to children, Childcare Program volunteers should not raise their voice to a child unless it is to warn them of an immediate threat to their safety, or the safety of another child or volunteer. Volunteers should specifically avoid any language that would tend to blame or shame any child.
- If a child's behavior is disruptive, the volunteer should address the child directly at eye level and calmly explain what behavior needs to change. If the child's behavior remains disruptive, the Childcare Program volunteer shall notify the child's parent or guardian.
- Childcare Program volunteers are not to solicit any private personal information from children, including, but not limited to address, phone number, email address, social media identity, living situation, etc. Such information may only be obtained from a parent or guardian.
- Childcare Program volunteers may not make contact with a Childcare Program child outside of the program itself, by any means, without prior specific and explicit permission of the child's parent or guardian.

- All Childcare Program volunteers are responsible for immediately reporting inappropriate behavior to the Childcare Coordinator, the Oasis Executive Director, or the Board of Directors as appropriate.
- All Childcare Program volunteers are responsible for immediately reporting suspected child abuse or neglect pursuant to Section 261.101 of the Texas Family Code. The report may be made to (1) any local or state law enforcement agency; or (2) the Department of Family and Protective Services. You may also report online at <http://www.txabusehotline.org>.

All persons are required to make the report immediately, and individuals who are licensed or certified by the state or who work for an agency or facility licensed or certified by the state and have contact with children as a result of their normal duties, such as teachers, nurses, doctors, and day-care employees, must report the abuse or neglect within 48 hours.

Texas law broadly defines "abuse" and "neglect" so that every action in which a child's physical or mental health or welfare has been or may be adversely affected is potentially covered. The statute explicitly excludes an accident or reasonable discipline by a parent or guardian that does not expose the child to a substantial risk of harm. However, if there is a question whether conduct constitutes "abuse" or "neglect" always err on the side of the child's safety and report the incident.

Solicitation

Solicitation unrelated to Houston Oasis is prohibited at all Houston Oasis events without the explicit approval of the Board of Directors and/or the Executive Director.

Volunteer's Code of Conduct

- All attendees must be treated with patience and respect. If you are experiencing difficulty with a attendee, please call on the Community Engagement Coordinator, Executive Director or board member to intervene.
- Be courteous, friendly and cooperative.
- You must follow the plan outlined by the Coordinator for the day you are volunteering.
- Any injury, accident, or incident where you might have experienced harm while volunteering must be reported to the Community Engagement Coordinator, the Executive Director, or Board of Directors immediately.
- Your wellbeing is important to us. If you are asked to perform a task or have a volunteer situation that is uncomfortable for you, or you feel you are unable to perform the requested task safely, please talk with the Community Engagement Coordinator, Executive Director, or board member right away.

The following behaviors are not permitted.

- Offensive or derogatory comments or jokes, including epithets or slurs
- Yelling, intimidation or threats
- Pushing, hitting or any unwelcome physical contact with an attendee, staff or other volunteer

Houston Oasis's commitment to our volunteers:

- We are committed to equal opportunity volunteerism. We coordinate a diverse community of volunteers from varied backgrounds.

- We are committed to working together towards creating a safe, supportive, and caring volunteer experience where we can learn from each other and grow in service to our community.
- If needed, Houston Oasis will provide a document confirming volunteer hours as community service.

VOLUNTEER HANDBOOK ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I, _____ have received and read the Houston Oasis Volunteer Handbook. I have had the opportunity to ask any questions I have regarding the contents of the handbook.

Signature of Volunteer

Date

Volunteer Confidentiality Statement

Confidentiality

I agree to hold in confidence all information I become privy to regarding attendees of Houston Oasis.

I will not make video or audio recordings, nor take photographs of Houston Oasis attendees or volunteers without the permission of Houston Oasis.

I will not remove from the office of Houston Oasis any electronic or written records, or copies thereof, without express permission of Houston Oasis. I accept full responsibility for maintaining the confidential nature of all records, client contacts and information marked confidential.

I understand that I am personally responsible and fully liable for any violation of this agreement.

Volunteer Signature

Date

Print Name

Houston Oasis Representative Signature

Date