



**Nicholas House**  
HELPING HOMELESS FAMILIES ACHIEVE SELF-SUFFICIENCY

# Volunteer Handbook



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# Welcome

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Welcome! We are pleased that you have chosen to join us in continuing our long history of dedication to helping homeless families in our community achieve self-sufficiency. Nicholas House, Inc. began as a volunteer effort and continues today through the combined efforts of staff and volunteers, working side by side.

With your commitment comes both rewards and responsibility. As a Nicholas House volunteer, you will reap the joyful rewards of improving the lives of parents and their children, the benefit of growing as a person and the satisfaction of a job well done. The responsibilities of your volunteer commitment include taking your position seriously and following the guidelines necessary to fulfill your job.

As a volunteer, you are an important part of the Nicholas House mission and, as such, part of the team. Without volunteers, we could not provide the programs and services that we do.

In an effort to help you feel confident and be successful in your new role, we have provided this handbook as a way of orienting you to Nicholas House and the Volunteer Program. If you have further questions after reading this material, please feel free to ask.

We are positive that you will meet the challenge of your commitment and we are proud to welcome you to the Nicholas House team.



Dennis Bowman  
Executive Director

We are committed to offering a volunteer experience that is worthwhile and challenging without regard to race, color, creed, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, national origin, age, ancestry, medical condition or physical handicap, disability, marital status or familial status.

## About Us

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Nicholas House, Inc. is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit agency that began life as an emergency shelter in 1982 by providing homeless families with meals and a place to sleep in the classrooms of Saint Bartholomew's Episcopal Church.

In 1993, at the request of the United Way of Metropolitan Atlanta and the Community Foundation for Greater Atlanta, Nicholas House took over the operation of an emergency shelter on Boulevard SE in the Grant Park area. This facility offers stays of up to 12 months and houses 12 families (around 50 parents and children) at a time. Nicholas House has since expanded its services to include apartment-based programs that serve homeless families at different stages of need, including a program for families with no income and additional barriers due to having a disability (New Horizons), families with enough income to pay month-to-month rent but without the savings for up-front costs associated with moving in to a new apartment (Home Again), and families with some income but not enough to pay rent (Homeless to Homes).

Since its founding in 1982, thousands of families have received vital services through Nicholas House. Nicholas House offers a comprehensive range of effective services that include, but are not limited to:

- Case management to assist families in developing and implementing an individualized service plan (ISP) to achieve self-sufficiency.
- Youth programs including an after-school program and evening activity hours.
- Workshops on finances, parenting, self-esteem and life skills.
- Employment assistance.
- Transportation assistance.
- GED preparation.
- A two-year Aftercare program for all participants.

Nicholas House accepts entire families with children no matter their composition — expectant mothers, single mothers with children, single fathers with children, opposite and same sex couples with children, and families with as many as ten members. Because most shelters are gender-specific, serving only men or only women and their children, homelessness often separates family members from each other. By accepting the entire family, Nicholas House helps keep families together. It is the families we serve that make us what we are - an agency of compassion dedicated to assisting homeless families achieve self-sufficiency.

## Mission Statement



*To help homeless families achieve self-sufficiency by providing a temporary place to stay while addressing the root causes of homelessness.*

# Helpful Tips

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## **ALWAYS**

- Maintain confidentiality.
- Maintain boundaries — do not do anything that could be considered unfair or show undue favoritism to residents. Treat all residents fairly.
- Arrive on time. Once the schedule is established, the staff and program depends on your presence. Please call within a reasonable time frame if you are unable to come in.
- Sign in using the Volunteer Log in the main office when you arrive and sign out as you leave. Be sure to also complete any additional paperwork required for your volunteer area (Workday Volunteers, Dinner Volunteers, etc.).
- Keep your personal belongings in designated areas to ensure security of your belongings. Staff will direct you to this.
- Know your limitations and don't be afraid to ask staff questions — it is better to say "I don't know but I will find out" than to give incorrect or incomplete information.
- Familiarize yourself with all safety procedures.
- Limit your personal phone calls and please silence your cell phone.
- When working with Nicholas House supplies and equipment, please return them to their proper locations once you have finished using them.
- Volunteers are asked to report any problems or concerns to the staff or Volunteer and Marketing Coordinator immediately.
- Please report to the Volunteer and Marketing Coordinator any changes in your contact information or schedule.
- Remember that the staff, Volunteer and Marketing Coordinator and you are part of the Nicholas House team. We are all here to support and assist each other. So please feel free to ask questions, give suggestions and share ideas.

## **DO NOT**

- Give out your personal contact information to residents.
  - Give medical, legal or personal advice without agency permission.
  - Invite friends or family to come with you without asking permission from the Volunteer and Marketing Coordinator.
  - Become personally involved with a participant.
  - Give residents money.
  - Call the residents when you are not at Nicholas House. Please refer them to their case manager when they are asking for help, assistance and advice.
  - Give out resident information to outside agencies or individuals. If someone is asking for information on a resident, always refer that person to the Case Manager.
  - Take pictures of any residents.
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# Volunteer Standards of Conduct

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## **ATTENDANCE AND VOLUNTEER HOURS**

Volunteer hours will vary depending on the nature of your involvement with Nicholas House. You and the Volunteer and Marketing Coordinator will agree on the hours of work and the schedule based on needs — yours and those of Nicholas House — and your availability. Please notify the Volunteer and Marketing Coordinator if you need to track your volunteer hours.

***Please remember to SIGN IN & OUT in the Volunteer Log when arriving and leaving.***

Nicholas House is dedicated to the safety of its residents and volunteers. Because of this, we need to know who is in the building at all times. While absences from scheduled shifts are unavoidable at times, if you know you are unable to come in, please notify the Volunteer and Marketing Coordinator in advance.

## **CONFIDENTIALITY**

Because of the sensitive nature of much of the work at Nicholas House, no personal information of employees, residents, members of the Board of Directors or volunteers can be given out to anyone. Disclosure of personal information could harm the individual or Nicholas House. If you have any questions or concerns about this, please speak with the Volunteer and Marketing Coordinator. All volunteers will be asked to sign a Confidentiality Agreement when starting work with Nicholas House.

## **RESTRICTIONS ON GIVING GIFTS AND ACCEPTING GIFTS OR GRATUITIES**

Because we have so many families, volunteers are discouraged from giving gifts to any single resident. If a gift is to be given, it should be given as a donation to Nicholas House. Volunteers are strongly discouraged from accepting gifts, gratuities or loans from organizations, businesses or individuals with whom Nicholas House has an official business relationship. These limitations are not intended to prohibit the acceptance of articles of negligible value that are distributed generally nor to prohibit you from accepting social courtesies which promote good public relations.

## **USE OF NICHOLAS HOUSE OWNED EQUIPMENT AND PROPERTY**

The use of Nicholas House owned equipment such as tools, vehicles or supplies for personal business or pleasure is strictly prohibited. Such equipment should be used for Nicholas House operations or those related operations that are authorized by the Volunteer and Marketing Coordinator, the Executive Director, or other staff. The proper care and protection of all Nicholas House equipment and property is the responsibility of every paid employee and volunteer.

## **SAFETY & SECURITY**

Your safety and security are a major concern of Nicholas House. You are expected to follow the safety and security rules listed below and take all precautions when performing your tasks. Please do not take unnecessary risks and report all safety hazards or security concerns immediately.

### **FOR SAFETY**

- Follow all job procedures and do not take short cuts.
- Using prescribed personal protective equipment, especially in the kitchen area.
- Immediately report all equipment malfunctions to a staff member.
- Report all unsafe conditions and/or accidents to a staff member.

### **FOR SECURITY**

- Report anyone that appears to be acting suspiciously to a Nicholas House staff member immediately. Pay particular attention to any indication that that person may be under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs.
- Report any unusual noises such as mechanical noises, alarms, loud yelling, etc.
- Control all Nicholas House keys and keep designated areas locked. Do not leave valuables unattended for any amount of time for any reason.

# Dinner Volunteering

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**Time:** 6:30-7:20 pm

**When:** Every night

**Volunteer Type:** Groups of 3-10 people

**Age Restriction:** None, but volunteers must be 15 years of age or older to enter the kitchen

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## When to Arrive

- Volunteers must arrive by 6:00 pm, and be ready to start serving at 6:30 pm. Report to the main office lobby where all volunteers must sign in using the main Volunteer Log. You will also be prompted to complete a dinner volunteer form for your group.

## What to Bring

- Main dish (meat, fish, pasta, etc.), side salad or vegetable, drink (lemonade, milk, etc.), dessert.
- Nicholas House provides cookware. Please bring disposable plates, cups, silverware, and napkins.
- Volunteers may cook in the kitchen or bring in the food already prepared.

## What to Expect

- Prepare to serve 50 residents (35 will be children). You will be given an exact headcount of residents in the week before your scheduled service date.
- The residents sit at tables and they can come up one at a time to be served dinner, or they can remain seated and the food can be brought to them.

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## Safety

The State Health Department requires:

1. Immediate hand-washing as you enter the kitchen.
2. Hair nets and gloves worn at all times (provided by NHI).
3. No “taste-testing” of menu items.
4. Care that food be fresh and properly cooked.
5. Children under the age of 15 must stay in the dining area and are not permitted in the kitchen. Contact Volunteer and Marketing Coordinator for options for younger children.

## Other Important Items

- ☐ Please make sure your group consists of no more than **10 volunteers**.
- ☐ Monday-Friday, the Evening Program Coordinator is on duty to assist your group with questions, equipment and other needs; on Saturday and Sunday, a weekend staffer will be available.



# Youth Services: After-School Program

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**Time:** 3:00-5:00 pm

**When:** Monday-Friday during the school year

**Volunteer Type:** Individuals or small groups (up to 8 people)

**Age Restriction:** Case-by-case basis

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## When to Arrive

- Volunteers must arrive at 3:00 pm unless otherwise arranged prior. Report to the main office lobby, where all volunteers must sign in, before proceeding to the After-School Program room.

## What to Bring

- Any materials discussed with the Youth Programs Coordinator, including materials for activities. However, not all volunteers need to come with supplies. This is dependent on the plan established between volunteer and Youth Programs Coordinator.

## What to Expect

- 5-15 elementary school aged children in the program.
- One hour (3:00-4:00 pm) dedicated to academics, and the remaining hour (4:00-5:00 pm) for play.
- Be prepared to encourage kids!

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## Safety

1. All volunteers must submit a background check at least 10 days prior to volunteering.
2. Volunteers are not allowed to be alone with a child at any moment. If a staff member is not present with you, other volunteers must be in the room.
3. Volunteers are not allowed to accompany or assist children to the bathroom. If a child needs help, notify the staff or parent immediately.
4. If a child discloses any abuse (current or past), or if you suspect any, you are required by law to report it. In this case, immediately contact the Volunteer and Marketing Coordinator within 12 hours so a report may be made.

# Youth Services: Nick's Activity Hour

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**Time:** 7:30-8:30 pm

**When:** Tuesday evenings (Thursday evenings if you would like to do art therapy with *drawchange*)

**Volunteer Type:** Individuals or small groups (up to 8 people)

**Age Restriction:** Case-by-case basis, but generally over 18 years of age

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## When to Arrive

- Volunteers must arrive at 7:00 pm. Report to the main office lobby where all volunteers must sign in using the main Volunteer Log. You may also need to sign in using another form provided by the Evening Program Coordinator.

## What to Bring

- Any materials discussed with the Youth Programs Coordinator, including materials for activities. However, not all volunteers need to come with supplies. This is dependent on the plan established between volunteer and Youth Programs Coordinator.
- A good attitude and a willingness to be a role model to children.

## What to Expect

- Around 8-10 children above 5 years of age will need you to lead structured activities with them. Bring an activity; you can divide the children into smaller groups with other volunteers if desired.
- If you would like to volunteer with *drawchange* to provide art therapy to the children on Thursday evenings, check their website at [www.drawchange.org](http://www.drawchange.org) for a volunteer application and next steps. Their volunteers are scheduled through *drawchange*, not Nicholas House staff.

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## Safety

- All volunteers must submit a background check at least 10 days prior to volunteering.
- Volunteers are not permitted to be alone with a child at any moment. If a staff is not present with you, other volunteers must be in the room.
- Volunteers are not allowed to accompany or assist children to the bathroom. If a child needs help, notify the staff or parent immediately.
- If a child discloses any abuse (current or past), or if you suspect any, you are required by law to report it. In this case, immediately contact the Volunteer and Marketing Coordinator within 12 hours so a report may be made.

# Adult Education Volunteering

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**Time:** 7:30-8:30 pm

**When:** Tuesday and Thursday nights

**Volunteer Type:** Individual or groups up to 3 people

**Age Restriction:** All volunteers must be at least 18 years of age

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## When to Arrive

- Volunteers must arrive by 7:00 pm and be set up by 7:15 pm. Report to the main office lobby, where all volunteers must sign in using the main Volunteer Log. You will also have other paperwork to complete as determined by the Evening Program Coordinator.

## What to Bring

- Handouts, displays, and supplies needed.
- Please bring printed copies of documents—we should have a projector available, but check with the Evening Program Coordinator before your service date to ensure it is available if it is needed.

## What to Expect

- Prepare to teach between 4-6 adult residents.
- As there is no childcare for children under 5 years of age, some parents may have small children with them.

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## Other Important Items

- ☐ You should discuss the details of your curriculum with the Evening Program Coordinator prior to your arrival.
- ☐ The Evening Program Coordinator is on duty to assist your group with questions, equipment and other needs.

# Workday Volunteering

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**Time:** Scheduled on a case-by-case basis with the Volunteer and Marketing Coordinator; typically sometime between 10:00 am and 3:00 pm

**When:** Usually on Saturdays; occasionally on Sundays or during the work week

**Volunteer Type:** Small or large groups, between 4 and 50 individuals

**Age Restriction:** Case-by-case basis, but generally age 15 and up

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## When to Arrive

- Volunteers should arrive at the time scheduled with the Volunteer and Marketing Coordinator.
- Report to the main office lobby, where all volunteers must sign in using the main Volunteer Log. You will also have workday group forms to complete in the Workday Group binder.

## What to Bring

- Workday supplies discussed with the Volunteer and Marketing Coordinator—typically brown paper yard trimming bags, paint, paint trays, paintbrushes, mulch, bottled water for your group, etc.
- If you have group members under the age of 18, please bring copies of their liability releases signed by their parents. Volunteers under the age of 18 without liability releases signed by their parents will not be able to participate.
- Please ask if there is a specific tool or piece of equipment you need-- we should have standard yard equipment (lawn mower, weed trimmer, rakes, shovels, brooms, etc.) available, but check with the Volunteer and Marketing Coordinator before your service date to ensure it is available if it is needed.

## What to Expect

- Prepare to put in some work tidying up either the exterior or interior of the Nicholas House shelter. Please take breaks and hydrate as needed.

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## Other Important Items

- ☐ You should discuss the details of your workday service date, including budget, timeframe, and the size of your group, with the Volunteer and Marketing Coordinator prior to your arrival.
- ☐ The Volunteer and Marketing Coordinator should be on duty to assist your group with questions, equipment and other needs.

## Volunteer Documents

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**Please sign the documents that follow this section and return them to the Volunteer and Marketing Coordinator.**

You may scan and email them to [nnyhoff@nicholashouse.org](mailto:nnyhoff@nicholashouse.org), fax them to ATTN: Volunteer and Marketing Coordinator at (404) 622-0388, or mail them to P.O. Box 15577, Atlanta, GA 30333, or drop them off at 830 Boulevard SE, Atlanta, GA 30312.

If you have any questions about this Volunteer Handbook or the process of volunteering at Nicholas House, please contact the Volunteer and Marketing Coordinator:

Norma V. Nyhoff  
Volunteer and Marketing Coordinator  
Nicholas House, Inc.

Mailing Address:  
P.O. Box 15577  
Atlanta, GA 30333

Physical Address:  
830 Boulevard, SE  
Atlanta, GA 30312

Phone: (404) 622-0793, ext.106  
Fax: (404) 622-0388  
Email: [nnyhoff@nicholashouse.org](mailto:nnyhoff@nicholashouse.org)  
Website: [www.nicholashouse.org](http://www.nicholashouse.org)

**IF WORKING WITH CHILDREN, BACKGROUND CHECKS ARE MANDATORY.**

If you are volunteering to work with children through the After-School Program, Nick's Activity Hour, or Summer Camp, you must complete a Nicholas House background check. To do this, send an email including your full name to [nnyhoff@nicholashouse.org](mailto:nnyhoff@nicholashouse.org) requesting an invitation to complete a background check. Volunteers are asked to cover the \$15 cost of their background check. Volunteers must complete the check (or provide proof of a background check completed within the last year) at least 10 days prior to the date they are scheduled to begin volunteering.



**Nicholas House, Inc. Housing Program  
Confidentiality Agreement**

It is the policy of Nicholas House, Inc. to protect the privacy and confidentiality of all residents (adults and children). Confidentiality means:

- ☐ We are not to discuss any resident by name or in any manner identify a particular person as a resident.
- ☐ We are not to discuss individual resident issues beyond the confines of secured office space.
- ☐ We are not to discuss resident issues with other residents.

Boundaries mean:

- ☐ You are to stay within your role as volunteer or visitor by not speaking inappropriately, showing favoritism or engaging in behaviors or discussions that can be construed as unprofessional or inappropriate for the work environment.

Phone Call Guidelines:

- ☐ When a caller asks for a particular person by name, please take a message and state that you are unable to say whether the person is a resident. You can take a message, put it on the message board and if that person is a resident he/she will return the call. Then state that you have no further information to share.

**UNDER NO CIRCUMSTANCES ARE WE TO CONFIRM OR DENY RESIDENCY OF ANY PERSON IN THIS FACILITY WITHOUT THE PERMISSION OF THE RESIDENT.**

Staff, volunteers and other persons associated with the facility (including residents) are prohibited from discussing the presence of a resident or child, present or past, without the expressed written permission of the Head of Household for the family.

Abiding by this policy is a requirement of your service with Nicholas House, Inc. Failure to abide by these requirements may result in termination of your service with Nicholas House, Inc.

Please sign this agreement. All signed agreements will be kept in Nicholas House, Inc. volunteer files as documentation of receipt of this notice.

Print Name \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

# Release of Liability



I, (print full name) \_\_\_\_\_, hereby release and hold harmless Nicholas House, Inc., its agents, employees, representatives, officers, directors, clients (adults and children) from any and all liability, costs, damages, causes of action suits, and/or claims of any kind or nature, related to or arising out of my providing volunteer services for Nicholas House, Inc.

As indicated by my signature below, I have read and fully understand the terms of this release. If I am under 18 years of age, I have reviewed this release of liability which at least one of my parents/guardians indicated acceptance of the terms of the release by signing below.

In addition, Nicholas House, Inc. has my permission to use any photographs or videos taken for publicity purposes.

Volunteer signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

If You Are Under 18 years old – Parent or guardian contact info and signature required below:

Parent(s) names (printed):

\_\_\_\_\_

Home Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ E-Mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Employed at: \_\_\_\_\_ Work Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Please list any important medical/health concerns that would be helpful or needed if an emergency arises:

\_\_\_\_\_

Parent Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

# Acknowledgement of Volunteer Handbook



I, (PRINT NAME) \_\_\_\_\_, acknowledge that I have received the Nicholas House, Inc. Volunteer Handbook (the "Handbook") and understand that violation of the procedures contained in the Handbook could result in termination of my volunteer service.

I further understand that the information contained in the Handbook represents guidelines for Nicholas House, Inc. and that Nicholas House, Inc. reserves the right to modify the Handbook or amend and terminate any procedures at any time.

I further understand that the contents of the Handbook do not form a written contract. Either Nicholas House, Inc. or I have the right to terminate my involvement at any time.

I further understand that if I have questions about the interpretation or application of anything contained in the Handbook, I should direct these questions to the Volunteer and Marketing Coordinator.

Volunteer Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Name Printed \_\_\_\_\_

Witness' Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Witness Name Printed \_\_\_\_\_