

**SHEARITH ISRAEL NIGHT SHELTER FOR HOMELESS WOMEN
VOLUNTEER GUIDE**

Thank you for volunteering your time to spend the night at our shelter! Without you, we could not keep our doors open. Your service insures that some very deserving women have a warm & safe place to stay the night while they heal and repair their lives. Attached is a summary of items that will help orient you to our shelter. Please familiarize yourself with them prior to volunteering. If you have any questions, your coordinator will be happy to answer them during your orientation when you arrive. The following is a reference guide to nightly activities:

- 1) The shelter is **KOSHER**. We follow the rules of **KASHRUT** (one of which is no mixing of dairy and meat). Only volunteers and staff are allowed in the kitchen. Staff and volunteers work together to operate and maintain a **KOSHER** kitchen. **Shelter residents are not allowed in the kitchen.**

- 2) **FRONT DOOR:** Only authorized persons are to enter the shelter. During the shelter season, the door is to remain closed and locked. Due to Fire Marshal regulations, **please do not bolt the lock.** The door automatically locks as it is pulled shut.

- 3) **TELEPHONE:** Check to make sure that the phone has been “unforwarded” from the synagogue office or voicemail. Please answer the phone with “Hello” for confidentiality reasons. All resident calls should be limited to 5 minutes unless the Resident Manager authorizes more time.

- 4) There is no smoking allowed!

- 5) **CONFIDENTIALITY**
Please protect the privacy of our residents and our volunteers. There are federal laws which protect the confidentiality of some of the information that the residents may share with you. Please do not share this information with anyone with the exception of shelter staff. You may be given information about a resident which will help you work more effectively with residents. Again, this type of information is confidential. Please refrain from discussing residents in the halls, common areas or on the telephone. If an inquiry is made about another resident, refer the inquirer to staff for follow up. Keep in mind that there may be residents fleeing domestic violence situations, so confidentiality is of utmost importance.

Information about our volunteers and staff is also to remain confidential. If you choose to share personal information with residents, that is allowable. However, please do not share personal contact information of other staff or volunteers with residents. These inquiries may be referred to staff, that can assist the resident with contacting the volunteer in an appropriate manner.

Nightly Activities

The volunteer and coordinator arrive at the shelter between **6-6:15pm**. The coordinator will provide your orientation for the evening. The Resident Manager will be available all evening for any other questions that may arise.

Sign in, review rules (following orientation) and review the nightly log for any special instructions. During your orientation, you will receive keys for the evening and have an opportunity to get more familiar with the facility. **Please be mindful that the office door should remain locked at all times.**

The residents begin to arrive at **6:30pm (6:45 on Sundays)**. They will ring the bell to let you know that they have arrived. Introduce yourself to them and make sure that they each sign in (and note their time of arrival) **BEFORE** entering the dorm or community room. In cases of inclement weather, the coordinator or staff may allow the residents to enter the shelter earlier.

Personal care items are kept in the shelter office. You have authorization to provide those items to any guest requesting them. **Note in writing, any OTC medication distributed.**

Check to see if there are wet linens in the washing machine. If so, please put them in the dryer. Also make a brief assessment of the kitchen to determine whether small tasks need to be completed (i.e. counter tops cleaned, leftover items in the fridge to be disposed of, etc.)

Talk with the coordinator to determine dinner plans. If the meal will be delivered, go ahead and preheat the oven in the event that it needs to be heated up. If the meal will be leftovers, assist the coordinator with getting the meal underway.

Make sure that there are appetizers and beverages available for the women by the time of their arrival. You may need to make tea or Kool-Aid. Make sure that the hot water urn is on and that cups, spoons and condiments are available to the women. Talk with the Resident Manager or coordinator to decide what to serve as appetizers. Again, the Resident Manager and coordinator are available to assist where needed.

Dinner is served at 7:30. This is the deadline for arrival, so most women should have arrived by then. Check the sign in sheet to see if others are expected later. If so, be sure to prepare a plate for those residents. Volunteers (and/or the group that prepared the dinner) serve dinner to the residents, joining them once everyone is served. This is a great opportunity to get to know the residents! Following dinner, please label and store the leftovers. Ask the residents if they would like to take any for lunch the following day. **Lunches are distributed AFTER breakfast to avoid any Kosher violations. A resident will be assigned to clean the community room after all of the food is taken away.** Each resident can dispose of their own plates, cleaning up after themselves.

When washing dinner utensils, please abide by Kosher guidelines. Keep the meat and dairy utensils separate, washing the utensils in the designated sink side (red-meat; blue-dairy).

For the remainder of the evening, there may be structured activities. If not, guests are allowed to watch TV, read, access the computers, retire early, talk with volunteers, etc. The Resident Manager will make sure that their chores are completed. If you note an area of the shelter that has been neglected, please bring it to the attention of your coordinator or the Resident Manager.

Your coordinator will likely leave following dinner, but the Resident Manager is available to you throughout the evening.

At 10pm lights go out in the dorm room. You or the Resident Manager may check and remind the ladies that the lights are going out. Then feel free to flip the switch!

Laundry must be completed by 10:30pm. Only staff may offer alternatives for laundry not completed. Just refer the resident to staff.

Guests must leave the community room by 11pm and may not re-enter the community room until 5:30am the following morning.

Linens for volunteers are kept in the office. To preserve our sofas and beds, please use the linens or your sleeping bag. You have the choice of sleeping on the sofa in the community room or in the office on the bed.

5:30am is wake-up time. You may want to prepare for breakfast before retiring for the evening. Items needed are as follows: cold or hot cereal, bowls, spoons, hot cocoa, coffee, fresh fruit, pastries, milk, juice, etc. Place packaged items on a hallway table for women leaving before wake up time. The female volunteer should turn on the lights in the dorm room at 5:30am.

Prepare continental breakfast.

If you are volunteering during the weekend, you may decide to allow the women to sleep later. Please discuss with the Resident Manager and communicate to the women.

For weekdays, all guests should *leave the shelter by 6:30am.*

Assist the Resident Manager with wrap up for the morning. Review your checklist and check with the Resident Manager to determine whether your assistance is needed with anything else.

I hope that you have a rewarding experience and enjoy your evening at the shelter. We welcome all ideas and feedback!