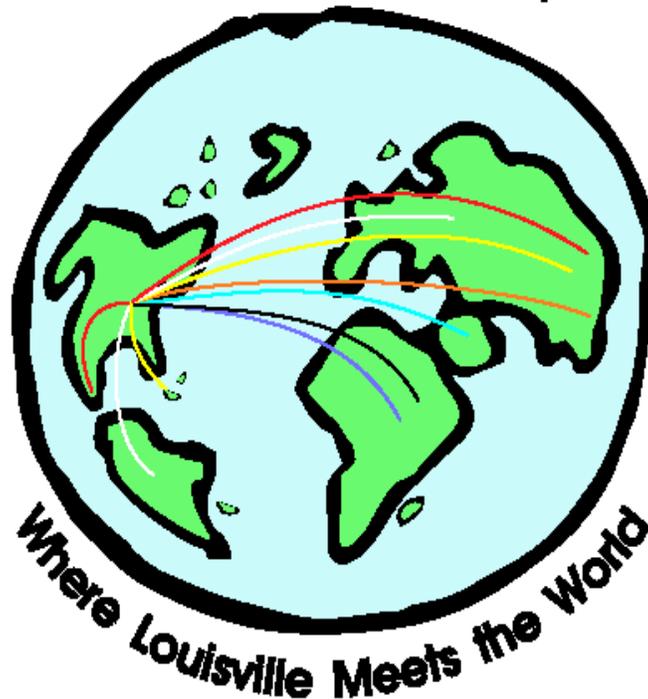


Americana Community Center

Americana
Education & Recreation Campus



VOLUNTEER INFORMATION HANDBOOK

Revised May 2015

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Thank you for volunteering with the AMERICANA COMMUNITY CENTER!

We would like to welcome you to our team! Your time volunteering here is very important to the success of the programs offered by the Americana Community Center (ACC) and we appreciate your support.

Overview of Americana Community Center

Our Mission

The Americana Community Center (ACC) is a non-profit organization, which provides a spectrum of services for the many diverse residents of Louisville Metro. These services enable people to discover and utilize resources needed to build strong families, create a safe, supportive community and realize their individual potential.

Vision

To create a vibrant, safe, multicultural environment for families and children with places for learning, playing, growing, sharing, socializing and connecting.

History

Americana Community Center (ACC) was established to serve the growing diverse population of South Louisville. The Center was originally housed in four units of the Americana Apartments. The first full-time Executive Director was hired in 1993 and ACC received its 501 C-3 status in 1994. In September 2002, Americana Community Center, with the support of several foundations, was able to purchase the former Holy Rosary Academy, located north of Americana Apartments (now Kingston Apartments). All activities were moved to the new location by February 2003. ACC has been able to grow and offer more services because of this bigger location.

Philosophy

We refer to the people we work with as “participants”—not “clients”—and we honor them with compassion and respect at all times. We value human dignity, social justice, and cultural sensitivity in all that we do, and we ask that all staff, volunteers, and participants adhere to these values while at Americana Community Center.

Staff Members

Executive Director – Edgardo Mansilla
Programs Director – Kristin Burgoyne
Family Coaches – Emilie Dyer and Matthew Hellmich
Finance Manager – Patricia Gould
Grants and Development Manager – Heather Bruner
Community Liaison VISTA – Elizabeth Roberts
Family and Youth Program VISTA – Justine Brunett
Front Desk Staff – Sebastian Philippe, Mercedes Herrera, Lydia Quiah
Facility Maintenance – Prady Rivera
Arts Coordinator – Kristi Johnson
Fiberworks Coordinator – Belissa Middleton
Garden Coordinator – Cara Jackson

Staff are here as resources for you as a volunteer! If you ever have questions or concerns, please talk to the appropriate staff member.

Volunteer Information

The Importance of Volunteers

Volunteers are essential to the work that we do in the Louisville community, providing support to our staff and teachers, working closely with participants, and creating a beautiful, welcoming environment. Volunteers help us provide quality services and often have the opportunity to form important, meaningful relationships with participants. It is always our hope that volunteers serve at Americana with the intention of both teaching and learning.

Procedures

All volunteers should fill out a volunteer application, attend an orientation, complete a background check or youth volunteer consent form (if relevant) before beginning their service.

Attendance and Absenteeism

As a volunteer, we depend on you. We do understand that, from time to time, certain situations may arise that prevent you from volunteering during the time you scheduled with the Volunteer Coordinator. In the event of an unscheduled absence, please alert the Volunteer Coordinator as soon as possible.

Ending Your Volunteer Service

You may discontinue your volunteer service with the organization at any time. We request that you notify the Volunteer Coordinator prior to your departure.

Policies

Policy Against Harassment

Americana Community Center is committed to maintaining a work environment free of unlawful harassment. The Americana Community Center prohibits harassment based on sex (including sexual harassment, gender harassment and harassment due to pregnancy, childbirth or related medical conditions) and harassment based on race, religion, creed, color, national origin or ancestry, physical or mental disability, medical condition, marital status, age, sexual orientation or any other status protected under federal or state law or local ordinance or regulation. All such harassment is unlawful. The Americana Community Center policy applies to all persons involved in the operation and prohibits unlawful harassment by any volunteer/employee including supervisors and co-workers.

Sexual harassment is unwanted sexual attention of a persistent or offensive nature made by a person who knows, or reasonably should know, that such attention is unwanted. While sexual harassment encompasses a wide range of conduct, some examples of specifically prohibited conduct include:

- Threatening, directly or indirectly, to retaliate against a person, if the person refuses to comply with a sexually oriented request;
- Engaging in sexually suggestive physical contact or touching another person in a way that is unwelcome;
- Displaying, storing, or transmitting pornographic or sexually oriented materials using Americana Community Center equipment or facilities;
- Engaging in indecent exposure; or
- Making sexual or romantic advances toward a person and persisting despite the person's rejection of the advances.
- Sexual harassment can be physical and/or psychological in nature. An aggregation of a series of incidents can constitute sexual harassment even if one of the incidents considered on its own would not be harassing.
- Volunteers are prohibited from harassing other volunteers whether or not the incidents of harassment occur on Americana Community Center premises and whether or not the incidents occur during working hours.
- Sexual harassment can involve males or females being harassed by members of either sex. Although sexual harassment typically involves a person in a greater position of authority as the harasser, individuals in positions of lesser or equal authority also can be found responsible for engaging in prohibited harassment.

If volunteers believe that they have been subject to harassment of any kind, they should:

- Make their unease directly and immediately known to the harasser;
- Make a written record of the date, time, and nature of the incident(s) and the names of any witnesses; and

- Report the incident to the Volunteer Coordinator or Programs Director.
- All incidents of sexual harassment or inappropriate sexual conduct must be reported regardless of their seriousness.

Policy Against Drugs

Smoking is not permitted on the premises. Additionally, the possession, use or sale of illegal drugs is never acceptable on our campus. The abuse of drugs (prescription or otherwise) and alcohol can compromise your performance as a volunteer and will set a poor example for participants.

Child Protection Policy

Americana Community Center is dedicated to providing a safe and welcoming multi-cultural environment for all program participants. Therefore, we are committed to the protection of all children and other persons participating in the activities and programs at Americana Community Center. Abuse, exploitation or harassment in any form - physical, emotional or sexual - will not be tolerated.

This Child Protection Policy covers any person employed by or volunteering at Americana Community Center in any capacity involving children and all outside organizations using Americana facilities for child programs.

At no time shall one employee or volunteer be allowed to be alone with a child. The only exception to this policy would be in a situation in which the contact occurs in a public place or other persons are able to clearly witness the interaction by being in and out of the area where the employee or volunteer is working with the child. If a situation unexpectedly does not meet this criteria of the policy, then alternatives must be put into place so that the event is in compliance.

Volunteers and employees must read the “Child Protection Policy” of this organization and submit to the appropriate level of screening and training, including a background check.

In accordance with this policy, employees and volunteers are required to report any suspicious or inappropriate behavior that suggests (1) sexual abuse or exploitation, (2) neglect, (3) physical abuse, or (4) emotional abuse. Staff are aware of the reporting procedure and can assist volunteers in filling out the proper incident report and notifying the Executive Director, police, and/or Child Protective Services.

A Few Tips:

- Once the report is made, your role is not to be the investigator. It is in the best interest of the child involved not to ask any leading questions. Leave this up to the professionals working on the case.

- If a child discloses abuse to you, again, do not ask leading questions. If more information is needed, say something like “tell me more” or “then what happened?” After a disclosure, follow the reporting procedures.
- Respect the sensitivity of the issue and keep the information confidential; do not share with other employees or volunteers not involved.

Working with Children and International Populations

Behavior Management and Discipline at ACC

General Rules:

- Respect adults and other youth.
- Behave in a safe way at all times.
- No cursing, including “shut up” and any name calling.
- No fighting, including wrestling, rough playing, hitting or spitting.
- Report all emergencies to a staff member immediately.
- Running and ball bouncing only in gym! (Not hallways)
- The library is for homework and reading. Students being disruptive should be asked to leave.
- No food or drink anywhere except cafeteria.
- Kids must go home after the program is over.
- No one in possession of or under the influences of drugs or alcohol will be allowed in the Center.
- No gang related clothing, gestures, language or behavior allowed.
- No weapons including matches, lighters, knives or water guns.
- Please create a welcoming environment for all who are at the Center.

How to Intervene in a Fight

Your first priority is to avoid getting hurt!

You need help. Tell a student to go to the office for help. Say: “Pat, go tell a staff member there is a fight in the gym. Right now!”

Next you want to disband the crowd.

If you can identify students, use their names and tell them to leave. Tell them where go. Say: “Michael, Shawn, Tara, go to the library, class, the cafeteria, etc.” Make eye contact and say your directives in a strong, loud voice. Avoid screaming.

Now that the crowd is leaving and help is on the way, you can deal with the fighters.

In most cases after about 30 seconds, a dominant person emerges. Talk to the other person; use his or her name and a loud voice. Say: “Chris! Stop it! Move back! That’s enough!”

Remember, you do not want to get yourself hurt, so keep a distance. If your voice does not reach them, try a loud noise, like clapping your hands.

Discipline

Discipline should always be a teachable moment that is focused on how to use a potentially negative situation to help empower and further the betterment of the child. When we work from the roots of respect it's easier for us to identify negative behavior, allow the youth to recognize that behavior, and all them to become part of process in solving that problem.

The following prompt should be used when a child is being disrespectful:

Step 1: You say: "Are you being respectful?"

If a child answers "No" go to step 2, if a child answers "Yes" go to step 4.

Step 2: You say: "Can you fix it?"

If a child answers "No" go to step 5, if a child answers "Yes" go to Step 3

Step 3: No further discussion is needed. Allow the child the opportunity to fix the disrespectful behavior that was just identified.

*If a child continues to be disrespectful after 3 confrontations go to step 5

Step 4: You say: "I disagree." Then identify the behavior that you feel is disrespectful. Then go to step 2.

Step 5: If a child is too angry, excited or unable to fix the disrespectful behavior you can either:

Send the student to the hall to think further about the situation and start the process again.
Send the student to a staff member who will continue with this process.

Give the child time to cool down, and then when it is possible coach the child through possible solutions to the problem. For the older youth this will include a written apology, for the younger kids the apology might be verbal but each will include four parts: *what I did, why I did it, what I should have done differently, and I'm sorry.*

*There are some behaviors that are completely unacceptable here at the Community Center. Drugs, sex, and violence have no place here, and anyone participating in these behaviors will be asked to leave.

It is important to **stay calm!**

If we are not calm, we are confrontational.

If we are escalated, we cannot de-escalate children.

If we are not calm, we are not safe people and we become unpredictable.

We must speak firmly and make our point without losing it.

Positive Reinforcement

This goes hand-in-hand with discipline and when used appropriately, can help deter behavior issues. Use positive reinforcement as much as possible!

- Identify and reward/reinforce socially appropriate behaviors.
- Praise kids when they are doing something right, even if it seems insignificant.
 - Example: Thanks for walking so nicely in the hallways!
 - 5 to 1 ratio: For every negative comment made to a kid, five positive comments should be made. Strive for this ratio!
- Framing is important.
 - Use DO instead of DON'T.
 - We constantly tell kids what NOT to do, but we need to tell them what to do.
 - Example: Instead of, "Stop talking," say, "You need to listen to the teacher."
- Reinforce peers for appropriate behavior in the presence of the student displaying inappropriate behavior. Ignore the inappropriate behavior; when the student engages in an appropriate behavior, immediately reinforce him/her.
 - Example: When someone is being disruptive in the library, praise a child sitting nearby who is quietly doing his or her work and ignore the disruptive behavior.
- Use pre-warnings as teachable moments.
 - Instead of immediately giving a warning, take the opportunity to discuss with kids what rule they are breaking, why it is a problem and how they can improve their behavior.
- Use if-then statements.
 - These create boundaries and teach limits.
 - Example: You need to calm down and walk away. IF you start a fight, THEN you will be suspended.

Setting Boundaries

It is important to set boundaries with participants as a volunteer, including both physical and emotional boundaries. Try to maintain an appropriate distance with program participants. If a child asks for your personal phone number, e-mail, or online profile name (Facebook, Snapchat, Instagram, etc.) politely decline and change the subject. Additionally, do not take pictures of program participants. It is also inappropriate for volunteers to meet children outside of designated program time. In terms of physical boundaries, volunteers are expected not to pick up children, braid hair, allow children to sit in their laps, or give hugs to program participants.

If you find that a child has developed romantic feelings for you, or you have been approached inappropriately by a teen, it is okay to feel uncomfortable. Do not ignore the behavior. Report it to a staff member you are comfortable with and know that the issue will be dealt with promptly.

Gift giving (including monetary gifts) is not appropriate because it creates dependency, which goes against ACC's philosophy of service. If you are interested in sharing gifts and/or money with the people we serve, consider instead donating to Americana as an organization.

Cultural Competency 101

Working at Americana, you will come across a number of different cultures. It is impossible to know everything about each culture and you will never be an expert. Instead, come with an **open mind** and a **willingness to learn**. It is important to remember that the differences within cultures can be just as big as the differences between cultures. Cultural competency is a continuous learning process!

Five essential elements that contribute to your ability to become more culturally competent:

1. Value diversity
2. Have the capacity for cultural self-assessment
3. Be conscious of the "dynamics" inherent when cultures interact
4. Institutionalize cultural knowledge
5. Develop adaptations to service delivery reflecting an understanding of diversity between **and** within cultures

Keep in mind:

While it's impossible to know the norms, behaviors, and attitudes of all cultures, it is possible to approach cross-cultural interchanges with curiosity and an open mind. Working across cultures necessitates reexamination of one's own attitudes, beliefs, values and prejudices, usually hidden from conscious awareness.

Cultural competence does **not** mean knowing everything about a culture, It is a mindset that leads to lifelong learning with: respect for differences, eagerness to learn, willingness to accept there are many ways of viewing the world

Cultural Insights

Traditions, family values, and individuals vary greatly. Differences are not shortcomings, but are insights into cultural diversity that can help us better understand behaviors we find odd. In trying to avoid culture-specific lists of behaviors, which can be interpreted as stereotyping, the following cultural insights apply to students from many cultures.

- **Personal space:** All students across cultures have different perceptions about personal space. What may be comfortable closeness in one culture may be perceived as an invasion of space or an aggressive posture in another.

- **Eye Contact:** Many students are not accustomed to looking directly at a person in a position of authority or at an older person. They feel it is more appropriate and respectful to avoid eye contact.
- **Comprehension:** Many students who are limited in English proficiency will refrain from asking for help and will not answer voluntarily. They will often smile or nod, seemingly to indicate comprehension, but in reality they don't understand.
- **Classroom Structure:** Many English Language Learners prefer to work cooperatively on any task that is assigned to them. Others may prefer to work individually. What may look like cheating to a teacher is actually culturally acquired learning – an attempt to mimic, see or model what has to be done. Keep in mind that it is possible that an English Language learner student has never been asked to take an active role in his/her learning.
- **Technology:** Many students and their parents have never seen the kinds of audio-video equipment we offer in American classrooms. Until they have been shown the learning potential of such equipment, they often view these materials as more for playing than learning.
- **Punctuality:** Students may often arrive late. Their attitude about time and/or punctuality may be different from that of the school/teacher.
- **Special education:** This is only now beginning to be an acceptable concept in many cultures. Children in need of special education are perceived to be a punishment for some sort of wrong committed by the parent(s) or some close family member.

Volunteer Code of Conduct

- Attend a volunteer orientation and submit to a background check (if 18 years or older and completing 10+ hours as a volunteer).
- Treat all participants with patience and respect. If you are experiencing difficulty with a participant, please call on the Volunteer Coordinator or other staff person to intervene.
- Report any injury, accident, or incident where you might have experienced harm while volunteering to the Americana Community Center staff.
- Respect the cultural, religious, and ethnic diversity of all participants, staff, and volunteers.
- Do not engage in proselytizing.
- Create healthy physical and emotional boundaries by following the "Setting the Boundaries" guidelines above.
- Engage with the participants in constructive ways. Volunteers may be asked to leave if they exhibit disruptive behavior, including excessive texting/talking on the phone.
- Respect the privacy of participants by only disclosing confidential information about participants to staff members.
- Abide by Americana's Child Protection Policy. This includes never being in a one-on-one situation with a child and reporting any suspected child or adult abuse, neglect, or exploitation.

- The following behaviors are never permitted. Individuals who exhibit any of these behaviors will be asked to leave immediately and will not be allowed to volunteer in the future.
 - Offensive/derogatory comments or jokes, including slurs
 - Yelling, intimidation, or threats
 - Pushing, hitting, or any physical contact with a participant, staff or other volunteer
 - Sexual harassment or abuse

Disciplinary Practices

If a volunteer is in violation of this code of conduct, the following disciplinary actions will be taken at the discretion of ACC:

Step 1: Oral warning with documentation in the volunteer's personnel file

Step 2: Written warning to individual and copy to volunteer's personnel file

Step 3: Termination/Dismissal

These guidelines are based on cumulative problems, regardless of whether the infraction is of the same general nature as a previous warning. The use of these disciplinary practices in no way alters the fact that your volunteering with the Americana Community Center is "at-will."

Dismissal

Dismissal of a volunteer is a serious consideration. Before a volunteer is dismissed, we will attempt to reconcile the solution, including a meeting between staff and volunteer involved. Dismissal of a volunteer may take place if a volunteer is unreliable, irresponsible, disruptive, demonstrates inappropriate behavior, or fails to adhere to the policies and procedures of Americana Community Center.

Americana Community Center's commitment to our volunteers:

We are committed to equal opportunity volunteerism and coordinating a diverse community of volunteers from varied backgrounds and social identities. 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 communities.

If needed, Americana Community Center will provide documentation confirming volunteer hours as community service.

Volunteer Handbook Acknowledgement

I have read the Americana Community Center's Volunteer Handbook. I have had the opportunity to ask any questions I have regarding the contents of the handbook, and I agree to abide by the policies outlined above.

Signature of Volunteer or Guardian

Date

Printed Volunteer Name

Please return this last page signed to the Volunteer Coordinator before beginning your service via email at volunteering@americanacc.org or in-person.