



Volunteer Manual

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living at home
with peace of mind

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WELCOME TO VILLAGES OF THE BERKSHIRES

Whether you are new to volunteering or someone with extensive experience, we want your time with us to be rewarding. We hope you will enjoy working with a congenial group of like-minded people engaged in community service while knowing that you are making a difference in the lives of our members.

This handbook will guide you through the requirements, policies, and procedures you need to be successful. If you have questions or suggestions that will make it a better tool for volunteers, please let us know.

Thank you!

VILLAGES OF THE BERKSHIRES MISSION

Villages of the Berkshires, Inc. connects members with each other and with the resources needed to remain active and independent while growing older at home.

VILLAGES OF THE BERKSHIRES, INC. STRUCTURE

Villages of the Berkshires, Inc. (VoB) is a 501(c)3 non-profit corporation managed by a part-time Program Director and overseen by a Board of Directors. The Board and various work group members actively guide the direction of the organization. Currently, there are active work groups for membership, volunteers, and paid contractors.

Let's Get Started!

HOW YOU CAN HELP

Tell us about your skills, interests, and life experiences and how they could be useful to our members, older adults who want to age in place. Most important of all: bring your heart and sense of humor to your volunteer service, along with an enthusiastic spirit which is, in itself, a priceless gift.

Volunteers take on assignments that coincide with their particular interests and abilities, as well as the needs of the organization and its members. You will be free to adjust the kinds of services you want to provide at any time. And, of course, we are happy to hear your suggestions.

HELP WHEN YOU CAN

Volunteer service at VoB should be enjoyable. You should feel free to accept or decline particular assignments, depending upon your personal schedule and commitments. It's okay to say no to a request if you are unable to commit to an assignment. You will be notified again, or you can sign up for something else that would fit your schedule and talents. You can take a break from volunteering for a brief or extended period of time, such as when you go on vacation or just need a break. Please inform the Villages office to give us as much notice as possible.

HOW WE HELP EACH OTHER

In addition to orientation, VoB holds a quarterly support meeting that all volunteers are encouraged to attend. We welcome your comments, experiences, and suggestions in order to build and adapt the types and range of services we provide. We will publish and distribute reports that illustrate the impact of your work. A listserv will provide a platform for conversation among volunteers. We want to work with you to build a community that is responsive and responsible.

Please call or email with any problem, question, or concern. We will work with you to find a solution.

Phone: (413) 409-6400

Website: www.villagesoftheberkshires.org

Email: info@villagesoftheberkshires.org

VoB may offer you opportunities to participate in workshops and classes to enhance your skills and improve services for our members. We hope you will find these useful in other aspects of your life.

Once a year you will be invited to a VoB volunteer recognition event to honor and recognize your contributions. It is our way of saying “thank you” for all the wonderful work you do and providing an opportunity for you to meet and celebrate with other volunteers.

GOALS OF THE VILLAGES VOLUNTEER PROGRAM

- To provide opportunities for new friendships to develop among volunteers and members as they participate in social programs, share experiences, and discover mutual interests
- To provide opportunities for civic engagement that encourage volunteers and members alike to feel needed and appreciated
- To ensure that volunteers and members have a pleasant and rewarding service experience
- To support the mission of VoB by providing quality services to members and the organization
- To provide social and educational opportunities that bring enjoyment and meaning to living in our community

GENERAL EXPECTATIONS OF A VILLAGES VOLUNTEER

As a Villages volunteer, you are the front line of our organization. With this comes the responsibility to put your best foot forward and adhere to best practices while representing VoB.

- Adhere to the rules and policies of VoB as outlined in this Volunteer Handbook.
- Treat all VoB participants with respect and with cultural appropriateness.
- **Respect all member privacy. What you see and learn when you visit a member must remain confidential.** Please notify the Program Director of any changes in a member's condition, but do not share that information with others, even at home.
- Contact the Program Director immediately if you are concerned or uncomfortable about a member's health or behavior. Ask questions when you are in doubt about anything. We want to hear from you. Information regarding elder abuse can be found at Berkshire Elder Services Protection Agency:
<https://lifepathma.org/services/services-for-elders/protective-services-program>
- Say "NO" to an assignment that you are not comfortable performing.
- Attend volunteer meetings and ongoing training classes.
- Accept the guidance of the VoB staff or designated supervisory person.
- Participate in opportunities to provide feedback on your volunteer experience.
- Notify VoB if you decide to pause or discontinue your volunteer work.

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

Villages volunteers provide a wide and growing variety of services to our members, enabling them to remain in their homes and continue to enjoy their network of friends and activities.

TRANSPORTATION

We do short trips, typically within eight miles, around Lee, Lenox, Pittsfield, and Stockbridge (these constitute the main hub - spoke areas will be added to other Berkshire locations) to appointments, social events, meetings, and book clubs, as well as grocery shopping and errands. For further distances, we will try to find a volunteer willing to make the drive, but cannot guarantee that we will be successful. When appropriate, the volunteer assists the member to and from the front door of their dwelling and helps carry packages into the home. Most members can get in and out of a car without assistance, but it is always good to check for special needs when you confirm the service.

TRANSPORTATION SERVICE CONDITIONS

Transportation is not provided to individuals who are:

- either medically fragile or a potential danger to the driver or themselves because of their mental or physical state
- non-ambulatory
- on oxygen
- ill at the time of the service; no sick visits

DRIVER QUALIFICATION

- Automobiles must have a current inspection sticker. Volunteer drivers must be approved with an acceptable driving record and provide a valid driver's license. All licenses will be run through the standard MA RMV check. All drivers must provide proof of their own insurance for primary coverage.
- Volunteer drivers must be over 21 years old and have had a valid license for a minimum of 3 years.
- The driver's vehicle must be in good repair, kept clean and tidy inside, and free of the smell of smoke. Appropriate winter tires should be on any vehicle used to transport members when needed. Seat belts must be operable and used at all times.
- Volunteers must use their own vehicle and not the member's vehicle for transportation.
- VoB drivers will wear VoB-issued name tags.
- Drivers must have a working cell phone with them. If there is an accident, the driver must immediately call for an ambulance, if necessary, as well as contact the police and be certain that there is a police report. VoB must be notified of the accident.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION FOR DRIVERS

Volunteers are expected to pay for their own gas and mileage. VoB will provide IRS guidance for charitable deductions, if requested. Parking fees incurred while transporting a member are the responsibility of the member. Fines for moving violations and parking tickets are the responsibility of the volunteer.

HOME ASSISTANCE

Many routine activities become difficult or impossible for members as they grow older. Help with what were once simple household chores can mean the difference between a day of frustration and a day of accomplishments. VoB Services may include:

- Helping with paperwork
- Assisting with technical equipment (for example computers, DVD players, phones, thermostats, Alexa/ Echo)
- Addressing minor household repairs, such as changing hard to reach smoke/CO detectors or lightbulbs
- Helping with groceries or food preparation
- Organizing household items
- Pet care, dog walking
- Running errands

COMPANIONSHIP AND CONVERSATION

Some of our VoB members are socially isolated, and the companionship and conversation provided by a volunteer can brighten their day.

- Reading aloud - books, mail, newspapers
- "Happy hello" - our phone check-in program
- Friendly visits - post hospital stay visits
- About an hour of social time

POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

The policies of VoB are designed to protect both our members and volunteers. We will review these at orientation, but feel free to contact us with questions at any time.

SERVICE COMPLICATIONS

- **If a member has a medical problem while you are together, call 911.**
- On the day of a service, if you arrive at the member's residence for a service and they do not respond, please try to call them, and if they don't answer, leave a message for them to call VoB. Often missed appointments are a simple mistake. The next step is for you to call VoB at (413) 409-6400 and let us know of the missed appointment. Our policy for no-shows is to err on the side of caution. VoB will call the member, then their emergency contact, and finally ask the Police Department for a wellness check.
- If you are unable to meet your commitment, please try to give at least 48 hours notice by emailing (preferred) info@villagesoftheberkshires.com or calling (413) 409-6400 (Monday through Friday - calls not typically returned on weekends).
- If a member asks you for more time than the original service request specifies, it is up to you whether or not to extend your time. If you cannot or would simply rather not, please ask the member to place another service request.
- With handy person tasks or minor repairs, it can get tricky. Please be aware of your time and potential expenses. It is always best to let the member and the VoB office know if you think a project is beyond the scope of a "neighborly fix" and would require skilled services or a financial investment. VoB maintains a list of service providers for members on our website.
- If you are requested to do something that you are not comfortable with, please decline, and ask the member to call VoB. Please also tell us if a member treats you rudely or offensively.
- It can be awkward when members offer a gift or to pay for a service. If this happens, they can make contributions on the VoB website.
- Please call VoB at (413) 409-6400 if you run into trouble and **use 911 in case of emergency**. We check messages Monday through Friday, but we are always eager to hear from you.

INCLEMENT WEATHER

The Berkshires serves up some adverse weather at times. Volunteers are not expected to offer services when the weather is questionable. You have the right to cancel based on your comfort level (please see Service Complications, above). All Villages volunteer services are suspended when Pittsfield Public Schools close. Please refer to www.pittsfield.net for notifications.

REMEMBER - IN CASE OF AN ACCIDENT OR EMERGENCY

- If an emergency occurs when you are providing a service for a member, it is important that you remain calm. Focus on helping the member and on notifying the proper authorities that can provide appropriate assistance. **When in doubt, always call 911.**
- If a member has a fall while with you, or if you find them on the floor when you arrive, resist helping them to get up. If appropriate, pull a chair over for them to use to get up on their own, but if they cannot get up on their own, call 911 for assistance.
- If a member is unconscious, do not try to move them, except in a hazardous situation, such as a fire. Call 911 immediately for emergency assistance.
- Always call the VoB Program Director as soon as possible to report the incident for our records. VoB is not a first responder.

PHYSICAL CONTACT

Volunteers often come into close personal contact with VoB members as they provide transportation, help with minor in-home repairs, or offer other assistance.

It may, at times, be necessary to offer a hand or elbow (light arm support) to help members with their mobility. Assisting aging and frail members to a greater degree physically can endanger the member, and perhaps even you.

Volunteers are strictly forbidden from making any inappropriate physical contact or engaging in sexual harassment, innuendoes, or overly familiar touching. Be careful not to offer advice about a member's health or safety, and avoid performing personal services that require close physical contact. Such requests should be directed to the Program Director, who may refer the member to a professional for personal care.

VILLAGES VOLUNTEERS DO NOT PROVIDE

- Medical services, such as medication maintenance or medical transport assistance
- Services to individuals who are bed-bound, frail, or not ambulatory
- Home repairs and services that require a licensed professional

REPRESENTATION OF THE ORGANIZATION

Volunteers are not authorized to act on behalf of, or make statements representing the official position of, the organization, unless they have been asked to do so by the Villages of the Berkshires Program Director or a Board Member. For example, volunteers should not make statements to the press or broadcast media without prior authorization.

VOLUNTEER DISMISSAL

Villages of the Berkshires, Inc. (VoB) may dismiss a volunteer if they fail to fulfill the duties of the position. Grounds for dismissal may include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Failure to adhere to any VoB policies, guidelines, or procedures
- Theft of property or misuse of the organization's equipment or materials
- Verbal or physical abuse of members
- Breach of confidentiality

PRIVACY POLICY

Volunteers are responsible for maintaining members' privacy, as well as the privacy of others in the organization. Identifying information should not be shared inside or outside the organization. If volunteers have questions regarding whether or not personal information should be shared, consult with VoB staff. Confidentiality must be scrupulously respected.

VOLUNTEER BACKGROUND CHECKS

Due to the sensitive nature of some of the work, and the high level of service and expectations of VoB members, all volunteers working with our members are required to undergo a criminal background check. There is no charge for this and all results remain confidential. Massachusetts state law requires CORI checks for volunteers of our organization.

Transportation volunteers will also have their driving records checked with MA RMV.

HOW TO GET STARTED

1. Visit our website www.villagesoftheberkshires.org
2. Click on Volunteers on the top menu, click on How You Can Help, then scroll down to complete our volunteer application, or visit this link:
https://berkshires.helpfulvillage.com/users/sign_up?user_type=new_member
3. Read the volunteer handbook and CORI Information in the confirmation email that you receive.
4. Call or email us with any questions.
5. Attend a brief in-person or virtual interview and submit CORI and RMV Forms with appropriate ID.
6. After CORI and RMV processing, attend an orientation session.

We look forward to hearing from you!