



VOLUNTEER HANDBOOK
AND
POLICY MANUAL

Revised January 2018

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WELCOME

Welcome to the U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants (USCRI) North Carolina Field Office! USCRI is a nongovernmental, not-for-profit national organization dedicated to addressing the needs and rights of refugees and immigrants. We have opportunities for highly motivated, passionate individuals. As a volunteer you will play an integral role in helping us fulfill our mission, and we are excited to have you on board.

This Volunteer Handbook and Policy Manual will get you acquainted with the many volunteer opportunities available to you, and provide you with an overview of our policies. This handbook should serve as a reference guide throughout your time as a volunteer. If you ever have any questions about your role as a volunteer or about the refugee and immigration issues or process in general, feel free to ask the Volunteer Coordinator or the USCRI staff member with whom you work. We hope to make your volunteer experience as rewarding as possible while simultaneously fulfilling our mission as a resettlement agency to help support refugees and immigrants begin their lives in North Carolina.

OUR VISION

Immigrants, refugees and uprooted people will live dignified lives with their rights respected and protected in communities of opportunity.

OUR MISSION

To protect the rights and address the needs of persons in forced or voluntary migration worldwide and support their transition to a dignified life.

OFFICE LOGISTICS**Office Hours:**

The USCRI NC office is staffed Monday – Friday, 9:00 AM - 5:00 PM. However, the office is open to clients and visitors only on Monday – Wednesday and Friday, 10:00 AM - 4:00 PM. Thursday is an administrative day to allow our staff to catch up with paperwork and other requirements. No appointments with clients should be made on Thursdays, unless necessary.

Address:

3824 Barrett Drive, Suite 200, Raleigh, NC 27609

Phone: 919-334-0072

Fax: 919-324-3687

Websites:

<http://refugees.org/field-office/north-carolina/>
www.refugees.org

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/uscommitteeforrefugeesandimmigrantsncfieldoffice>

CONFIDENTIALITY

Volunteers are required to sign a confidentiality agreement (at the end of the handbook) stating that you will not share any personal information about clients, other volunteers or donors without their consent. Some key things to remember:

- Case files must never leave the office and should be returned to their file drawer as soon as you are done working with them.
- Print documents related to clients should be immediately filed or shredded, and should never be left out where others can see them.
- Do not leave digital files containing confidential data open on computer monitors when you are not using them. Save and close files when you are done working with them.
- Do not include confidential information in emails unless directed to do so. All emails should include a disclaimer at the end regarding confidentiality.
- Make your best effort not to have confidential conversations in hearing range of others. This can be tricky in our small office.
- You will have to share some information in the course of your work with USCRI. For example, if you are trying to help a client make a medical appointment, you will need to share some information with the health facility. Keep in mind the principle that you should share the minimum needed to assist the client.

In addition, it is office policy not to question our clients about what happened to them before they arrived in the U.S. Many survived serious trauma and are resettling here in hopes of starting over, so asking them may needlessly distress them. Unless the information is volunteered or required to provide essential services, please do not pressure our clients to reveal things about their past.

WORKPLACE SAFETY POLICIES

Volunteers are not covered by USCRI's Worker's Compensation Policy. We do our best to have a safe work environment and ask volunteers to follow policies and use common sense to avoid injury.

GRIEVANCES

The staff of USCRI NC do our best to support volunteers and provide clear communication and a safe, comfortable work environment. Should anything arise that causes you to feel disrespected or unsafe, including any concern ranging from unclear assignments to any kind of harassment, first try to speak with the Volunteer Coordinator or the program manager. If that is not possible or practical, speak with the Field Office Director. The Volunteer Coordinator and the Field Office Director are always available for urgent concerns.

ALCOHOL AND DRUG USE AND ABUSE

USCRI strictly prohibits the use of, or dealing in, any illegal drugs or other controlled substances on the premises at any time. It is against agency policy to work while impaired by drugs or other

controlled substances. Any volunteer reporting for work under the influence of alcohol or controlled substances will be asked to leave immediately and may have his or her volunteer role with USCRI terminated.

APPROPRIATE DRESS

Please be sensitive to the cultural differences of our clients and avoid excessively revealing clothing, e.g., sleeveless tops, short skirts or dresses. In warmer months, this may mean that the clothes you might wear outside are not appropriate for work with the clients. Discuss with the Volunteer Coordinator if you have any questions or concerns.

ABSENTEEISM

Volunteers should do their best to be present and on time for each event or activity for which they are scheduled. If you know that you will be late or absent, contact the person in charge of the event or your program manager at least 24 hours before you are expected to come or as soon as possible so that alternate plans can be made.

INSURANCE AND LIABILITY

For a volunteer to transport clients, you must first submit a copy of a valid driver's license and proof of insurance (full coverage). (This information should already have been submitted with your volunteer application.) USCRI and the affiliate agencies are not responsible against any and all liability imposed or claimed, including attorney's fees and other legal expenses, arising directly or indirectly from any act or failure of a volunteer, including all claims relating to the injury or death of any person or damage to any property.

COMMUNICATING WITH STAFF

As you know or will quickly learn, the staff at USCRI NC are extremely busy. This does not mean that we don't appreciate your time or don't want to answer your questions – we very much do! Volunteers are encouraged to approach and communicate with the USCRI NC staff on any questions about assignments, deadlines, or how to best help clients.

HARASSMENT POLICY

Volunteering should be an enjoyable experience. Harassment is not only illegal, but it also creates uncomfortable conditions and unpleasant experience for everyone involved. Any volunteer who feels harassed should speak to his/her volunteer program manager or the Field Director in attempt to reach a solution.

VOLUNTEER CONDUCT

USCRI reserves the right to terminate a volunteer without cause, but will always consider the cause leading to the termination.

Although it is not possible to list all the forms of behavior or conduct that are considered unacceptable in the workplace, the following are examples of infractions or conduct that may result in the limitation and termination of the volunteer relationship.

- Misuse of agency funds, equipment or materials
- Working under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs
- Possession, distribution, sale, transfer or use of alcoholic or illegal drugs in the work place or while working with the clients
- Fighting or threatening violence in the work place
- Boisterous or disruptive activity in the work place
- Negligence or improper conduct leading to the damage of property
- Repeated failure to follow a program manager's reasonable request or to carry out a reasonable job assignment
- Gross misconduct or insubordination
- Violation of safety or health rules
- Abuse or mistreatment of clients, interns, other volunteers or employees
- Sexual or other unlawful harassment or discrimination
- Possession of dangerous or unauthorized materials, such as explosives or firearms, in the workplace
- Excessive absenteeism without notice
- Releasing confidential information

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITY DESCRIPTIONS

- **Administrative Support Volunteer**: You can help in the Reception Area to greet our visitors, answer the phones and assist in special projects as needed for our staff.
- **Donation Pick-Up and Delivery Volunteer**: At times, we receive donations of large furniture items, such as tables, couches and beds. We would be grateful for volunteers willing to help us pick up, store and deliver donations as the needs arise.
- **English as Second Language Instructor/Tutor**: Most of our clients arrive with little or no English language skills. Many have children that attend schools. They need assistance with English to accelerate their learning. ESL opportunities are available in group or individually settings, internally at our office, at local libraries or schools, or in-home with clients.
- **Family Mentor Volunteer**: You can provide support, orientation, arranging meals and outings, and help with general community information to a newly arrived refugee individual or family. We will offer you orientation, introductions and ideas. You can work at a frequency that works best for you and for the refugee family assigned to you.
- **Medical Mentor Volunteer**: Medical mentors serve as valuable resources to refugee families by improving their understanding of their own health and the U.S. medical system and practices. Some individuals and families have a vital need for medical treatment, initially as well as ongoing. The medical mentor would transport the individual to and from medical appointments and help them to understand their treatment.

- **Transportation Volunteer**: Refugees arrive in the U.S. not knowing their way around their new city and without a car. You can help a refugee feel more comfortable in their new environment by teaching them how to use public transportation and by providing transportation to appointments, such as school enrollment, social services, doctors, etc. This is a wonderful opportunity to meet and directly help local refugees.
- **Welcome Home Project**: By participating, you can make a positive difference in the lives of newly arrived refugees. The project includes securing furniture and household items and setting up the items in a home for an arriving family. This project can best be performed by individuals within a groups, such as a church, a mosque, an organization.

RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Volunteers have the following rights:

- To be treated with respect at all times by staff, clients and other volunteers.
- To have access to information necessary to perform tasks and duties while serving clients.
- To attend agency-sponsored trainings and special events.
- To use a grievance process for concerns or complaints about staff or other volunteers.
- To have a worthwhile and challenging volunteer assignment.
- To indicate their limitations on time and responsibilities.
- To express their ideas and innovations regarding client needs or services.
- To be recognized for their contributions.

Volunteers have the following responsibilities:

- To treat clients, other volunteers, interns and staff with respect at all times.
- To protect the confidentiality of clients and client information at all times.
- To clearly identify themselves as USCRI volunteers.
- To track and report all activities and time spent volunteering with USCRI.
- To communicate openly with staff to provide timely and appropriate services to clients.
- To complete agreed-upon tasks or work with clients, and to communicate to staff regularly.
- To advocate for clients to obtain access to services, professional interpretation and equal treatment at all times.
- To immediately report acts of discrimination, racism or unfair treatment to staff.
- To maintain personal boundaries and a clear goal of encouraging clients to attain self-sufficiency and independence.
- To respect others' expertise and to work as a team with staff and other volunteers.
- To uphold the goals of USCRI and not to undermine the agency's relationship with the clients by supplanting, rather than complementing, the agency's services to the clients.

END OF DOCUMENT.

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VOLUNTEER HANDBOOK ACKNOWLEDGMENT AND RECEIPT*

Signature on this receipt acknowledges that you have reviewed the U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants Volunteer Handbook and Policy Manual.

Volunteer Handbook Statement of Certification

I, _____, certify that I have received and reviewed the Volunteer Handbook and Policy Manual.

I further understand that, by signing this statement as required, I am indicating that I have read the Volunteer Handbook and Policy Manual and understand its contents, or have discussed questions I have with the Volunteer Coordinator. I also realize that this statement will become a permanent part of my volunteer personnel file.

Volunteer Name (Print)

Signature

Address

City, State, Zip

Date

*Print, sign and return to:

Volunteer Coordinator
USCRI North Carolina Field Office
3824 Barrett Drive, Suite 200
Raleigh, NC 27609
919-334-0072 x4001