

INTERFAITH HOSPITALITY NETWORK

COORDINATORS MANUAL

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WELCOME

Welcome to the Interfaith Hospitality Network (IHN).

In becoming a volunteer, you join with thousands of others who are compassionately addressing one of the most pressing social problems of our time—homelessness.

The Interfaith Hospitality Network *Volunteer Coordinator Manual* is a guide for Network coordinators in implementing and managing the IHN program in their congregations. This manual, in conjunction with the *Volunteer Host Manual*, addresses the policies and procedures of running the Network program, as well as the spirit of hospitality in which this work is accomplished. Sections of the *Volunteer Host Manual* are summarized in this manual; however, all coordinators should be thoroughly familiar with both publications.

As each Network program develops, coordinators and hosts will find out what works best in their own congregations. Experience, along with the information presented in this manual, will guide your efforts to provide an enriching program for both guests and volunteers.

Thank you for your commitment.

Karen Olson
Executive Director
National Interfaith Hospitality Network

I. The Interfaith Hospitality Network

The Interfaith Hospitality Network was created in response to the growing need to provide shelter, meals, assistance, and compassion to families without homes. Founded in 1986 in Union County, New Jersey, the NIHN program has been replicated widely and now includes over 100 Networks and many new Networks in development.

The Interfaith Hospitality Network opened its doors to families on November 2, 1997 at All Saints Episcopal Church. It started as a collaborative effort of the YMCA of Greater Worcester, the Central Mass Housing Alliance and the faith community. Today IHN works in collaboration with Friendly House and the faith community, and currently has 30 host sites.

The IHN program unites the religious community in its efforts to assist the homeless. The program mobilizes community resources: churches and synagogues for overnight lodging, and congregations for volunteers. The Network employs a Director, a Case Manager, Weekend Coordinators and a Van Driver. The Day Center is located at Wesley United Methodist Church, 114 Main St. Worcester.

Congregations participating in the program provide overnight lodging and meals for three to five families (up to 14 people), for one or two weeks, two times per year. The Network assists families with children. Because the program is staffed by volunteers during the evening, persons exhibiting clear signs of alcohol or drug abuse, or psychiatric illness, are not appropriate for sheltering in the Network.

Participating congregations furnish clean, safe, and private sleeping quarters as well as a hospitality room where the guests can relax, socialize, do homework, or watch television. Guests arrive by van at the congregation at 5:30 PM and remain overnight. The congregation also provides the evening meal, a bag lunch and breakfast for its guests each day. The van arrives each morning between 6:30 and 7 am (later on the weekends) to bring the guests to the Day Center. From there children go to school and adults go to work or stay at the center to meet with program staff and work on housing issues and other needs.

Volunteers in the IHN program provide homeless families with basic human needs - shelter, safety, and sustenance – with a spirit of warmth and hospitality. Congregations become temporary “homes” in which families are treated as guests of the congregations and individuals are accepted as they are. In this environment, guests can maintain their dignity and self-esteem. The kindness of hosts can help alleviate the hurt and alienation of homelessness, and both volunteers and guests can grow and learn from each other.

While the IHN program cannot solve all the problems of homeless families, the support of caring people in the Network can make a traumatic time easier to cope with. It can give guests the help they need to begin to solve their problems. And it can give them hope and comfort as they work to regain their independence.

II. The Role of Coordinators in the Interfaith Hospitality Network

The success of each Network depends on the efforts and enthusiasm of hundreds of volunteers. The volunteers who organize those volunteers and manage the Network program in each congregation are called primary coordinators.

Each host congregation relies on a team of coordinators (usually three) to manage hosting responsibilities. One or two primary coordinators are appointed to manage the overall program. The primary coordinators are responsible for:

- Recruitment, training, and support of volunteers
- Program planning and development
- Program solving and decision making
- Acting as a liaison to the Network director, congregation and support congregations
- Overall program management

(See Volunteer Coordinator job description)

The primary coordinators work with one or more coordinators with specific assignments such as:

- Host Coordinator** The host coordinator schedules evening and overnight volunteer hosts.
- Meal Coordinator** The meal coordinator oversees the menu planning for the host week to avoid duplication and ensure that meals are well balanced. He or she also schedules volunteers to prepare and serve dinner. The meal coordinator would ensure a supply of needed foods is on hand, such as, milk, bread, lunch items, and snack foods.

Please note that the primary coordinator/s work with the host and meal coordinators to develop an **inclement weather plan** for the IHN program director's review and approval. The plan should identify volunteers who live near the host congregation and/or have appropriate transportation so they can commit to making sure the host congregation is adequately staffed at all times when guests are present. The plan also should include ways to insure that our guests will have meals during inclement weather, such as maintaining extra canned staples, frozen and refrigerated foods; special attention should be given to supplying extra nonperishable foods during months of unpredictable weather.

Some congregations also have a donations coordinator, activities coordinator and a supply coordinator. *Each host site organizes in the manner that best suits their needs.*

Some congregations have the primary and host coordinators act together as team leaders. Each serves for two years. A new person is appointed in alternate years. This ensures that an experienced coordinator will always be paired with a less-experienced person.

While the primary coordinators assume the most responsibility for the program, all coordinators take on management roles. Their responsibilities include planning and organizing how the program will work at their congregations. Their main role is volunteer management: recruiting, training, supporting, and recognizing the many individuals needed to run the Network. Coordinators are also called upon to problem-solve and make decisions during host weeks.

Primary coordinators act as liaisons to a wide range of constituents. They are accountable to the volunteers, guests, clergy, the Network Director, and other groups or programs sharing congregation resources. Occasionally, a conflict may arise between these various groups about the Network program. The coordinator must appreciate the differing needs of all these constituents and be able to respond appropriately and effectively to the concerns of each. Good communication skills are essential; flexibility, diplomacy, and a good sense of public relations are also helpful.

While coordinators are accountable to the congregation and are the most visible participants in their congregation's program, the volunteers they manage are the backbone of the Network. Coordinators facilitate the work of the many volunteers needed to run host weeks.

III. Volunteer Management

A. Recruitment

Approximately 30 to 40 volunteers are recruited as dinner cooks, evening and overnight hosts for each host week.

Recruiting volunteers actually begins when the congregation first considers participating in the Network. The process of considering the program, seeing the IHN introductory videotape and discussing it in the congregation will have paved the way for actual volunteer recruitment. A list of prospective volunteers may previously have been generated as a means of measuring support for the program.

What follows are successful recruiting techniques employed by existing Network coordinators. The first three are especially useful the first time the congregation hosts; after that, it is usually only a matter of posting a schedule and then calling people to fill in where needed.

One-month prior to hosting, sponsor a sign-up Saturday/Sunday. Announce the event in the congregation's newsletter or bulletin with a description of the program. Enclose a flyer in the worship service bulletin. Place a sign-up board in a central location for sign-up after service.

The clergy person encourages participation by announcing the upcoming host week from the pulpit, and by drawing attention to the notices in the bulletin and newsletter, and the sign-up board. Clergy support is critical to the success of the program.

Coordinators may personally phone people who have expressed an interest in the program or have volunteered previously.

Coordinators and volunteers may deliver “testimonies” (positive experiences about volunteering) or make announcements during worship services.

Coordinators can encourage existing groups, such as Woman’s Circles, Men’s Clubs, Study Groups, and Youth Groups to discuss the program and consider participating as a group by preparing and hosting meals or assisting with setup or takedown and final cleanup. Often Men’s Groups come in on Saturday and prepare a big breakfast; Woman’s and Youth Groups collect personal items such as toothpaste and shampoo for the guests. It is important to keep a list of all volunteers in recruiting for subsequent host weeks.

One-month prior to hosting, a master schedule with time slots for each responsibility can be posted in the church or synagogue for people to fill in. Or a blank schedule can be mailed to previous volunteers who can call the coordinator with their time preferences.

Keeping the Network program in front of the congregation during non-hosting times will facilitate volunteer recruitment efforts. Sermons that discuss social problems including homelessness are helpful, as well as anonymous stories about volunteers and guests in the congregation’s bulletin or newsletter.

B. Training and Support

Once recruited, volunteers will need training to feel comfortable and be successful in their roles. It is also essential that all Network volunteers receive the information they need to ensure the smooth functioning of the entire Network and provide as much continuity as possible for the guests.

Training should take place at each host congregation approximately two weeks before the congregation hosts for the first time. If volunteers from support congregations are involved, they should also attend the training at the host congregation facility. The initial training should be led by the Network Director, the primary coordinator(s), and, if possible, a coordinator from an already existing Network. Because new volunteers will always be joining the program, training sessions should be held at least once a year.

Volunteer training includes “technical” and “sensitivity” training designed to help volunteers be effective and comfortable as hosts. Technical training involves the volunteers’ roles and responsibilities in the daily routine of Network operation. It covers the information found in the *Guest Handbook* and the *Volunteer Host Manual*, as well as

information specific to the particular host congregation. Sensitivity training provides guidance in host/guest relationships and sensitivity toward guests.

The training can include the use of the IHN videotape, “How Can I help?” Talking with guests and volunteers. All volunteers are strongly encouraged to read the Guest Handbook and Volunteer Manual before each hosting cycle.

While good training ensures that volunteers have the essential knowledge and skills needed to perform their chosen duties, coordinators will need to supervise the work of volunteers and provide appropriate support. Volunteers are entitled to the sincere interest and encouragement of someone who is well informed, patient and thoughtful.

Volunteers have a right to be heard and to have a part in the planning and decision-making process in their congregation. Coordinators must keep volunteers informed about what is going on in the Network, including any new policies, procedures and developments. Coordinators can support volunteers by listening to their concerns and taking appropriate action when necessary. They should be available to discuss any problems that come up as well as to provide ongoing direction.

Coordinators would also want to seek out and cultivate volunteers who show leadership skills. For example, an organized volunteer who cooks dinners for the Network on a regular basis may make a wonderful meal coordinator. Coordinators need to plan for the future of the program and be alert as to which volunteers may be called upon to step into positions of greater responsibility. Coordinators themselves will need replacement at some point, usually after a two-year term.

Always remember that you asked someone to volunteer and you need to give volunteers a chance to do what is expected, but you will need to be available to answer questions.

C. Recognition

Even if they don't say it, most volunteers like to be thanked for their contributions. Recognizing the good work of volunteers is part of supporting them. Like recognizing the strength and attributes of guests, it can lead to a sense of empowerment and perhaps, an even greater contribution.

Coordinators can be as creative as they wish in recognizing volunteers. The following are suggestions.

- Hold an annual celebration dinner in your congregation in recognition of the work of volunteers.

- Send thank-you notes to all volunteers after host week, mentioning specific things volunteers did that were especially useful or helpful.

- Ask a particularly effective volunteer to help with the next volunteer training, or write an article about his or her experiences for the Network newsletter or congregation bulletin.

- Present meaningful tokens of appreciation, perhaps a copy of a guest's child's artwork that has been laminated or framed.

Ask clergy to be involved in acknowledging volunteers, either formally in front of the congregation, or informally, one-to-one. This recognition may be very meaningful and important to volunteers, especially if the clergy person is an active volunteer as well.

There are many possibilities for acknowledging volunteers. Not all of them need to be tangible. The important thing is that volunteer's feel noticed and appreciated for their willingness to offer their time and energy. Coordinators should remain conscious of this and do what they can to provide volunteers with appropriate recognition

D. Volunteer Disappointment

Volunteers may be disappointed (or angry) if guests do not behave in a manner that the volunteer finds appropriate. Some times volunteers are upset if guests do not express appreciation for what the volunteers provide. At times, a guest may be discourteous to a volunteer (or vice versa). Some volunteers may take a lack of thanks personally and be reluctant to volunteer again. It is important for volunteers to recognize the tremendous stress that guests are under. Many will be tired and discouraged. Coordinators may need to reassure their volunteers that discourteous behavior is not directed personally.

At times there may be fewer guests or more guests than anticipated staying in the Network, causing volunteers to feel that they are not needed. Coordinators can help volunteers understand that they are important and needed no matter how many guests are being served. Understanding the reasons is helpful: sometimes guests have appointments in the evening, the number of families needing shelter varies, or a family may just leave without notice. In any case, coordinators can help volunteers by reminding them to remain flexible and to offer their hospitality to the families who are in the program.

The Program Accommodations

A. Facilities

The coordinating team at each congregation will be involved in the initial accommodation setup. Health, safety, and privacy are the primary concerns when deciding upon room arrangements. Ideally, each family will have its own sleeping area, such as in a separate religious education classroom or a larger room divided by partitions. If needed, partitions are available through the Network. The rooms should be as close together as possible for ease of supervision. All rooms should be convenient to bathroom facilities.

A single hospitality room, separated into an adult lounge area with sofa, chairs, tables, television, etc., and children's activity area, provides a good arrangement for adult relaxation and child supervision. Parents are to supervise their children at all times.

The kitchen and dining facilities (i.e., pantry space, refrigerator space, dinnerware, etc.) that are to be used should be decided before the first host week. All hospitality areas should be clearly defined so that the guests understand the rooms available to them and the host congregation is comfortable with the intended use of their building.

The following safety measures are essential: all accommodations must have smoke detectors, fire extinguishers and exit signs; and congregation must have a planned and posted route of exit in case of fire or emergency. This must be reviewed with all guests weekly. Host congregations are urged to consider the layout of their guest accommodations and add all safety measures deemed necessary.

B. Supplies and Equipment

The Network supplies the beds, blankets, pillows, mattress covers, sheets, pillowcases, towels, cribs, highchairs or booster chairs, and children's car seats. If your congregation is in need of any of these items you can request them through the Network Director.

The following is a list of basic supplies needed for a host week:

Food Staples

Cooking Utensils, dishes, silverware

Lunch/ Sandwich Bags

Kleenex, Paper Towels

Alarm Clock(s)

First Aid Kit, Medicine boxes (provided by the Network, inventoried on move in day and stocked by the host congregations).

Iron, Ironing board (available at the Day Center if needed)

Toys, books and videos

Baby Food, Cereal, Diapers and wipes

Often volunteers have items they would like to donate to a family; in order to be fair to all guests it is recommended that all donations go through the Network Director. They are well informed of what each family (present and past) is in need of. Some guests are very embarrassed by volunteers assuming they need things. And some guests feel very left out when attention is only given to other families.

C. Preparing for host week

All of the hard work and organization of the coordinators will pay off during the host week period. Preparing for host week will become routine as the congregation becomes accustomed to the schedule and requirements of housing the Network guests. The following is an approximate schedule that may be useful when preparing for host week:

One Month Prior to Host Week

Sponsor Sign-up Saturday/ Sunday.

Put a notice of host week dates in bulletin and newsletter.

Pursue recruitment of volunteers.

Schedule volunteers

Plan training session, if appropriate; if training is not planned, be sure all volunteers have handbooks to review.

Two weeks prior to host week

Network Director contacts coordinator:

with number and composition of families expected;

plans moving in time and moving out time,
special supplies needed such as diapers, crib, highchair;
any birthdays during week;
sets time and date to meet the guests at current site and
time to pick up guests on Saturday and Sunday.

Coordinator:

talks with assistant coordinators to review number of guests and make appropriate preparations.

coordinators call volunteers to remind them of scheduling and duties (or mail reminder postcards one week before host week)

One Day Prior Host Week:

Contact Network Director for updated list of families

All equipment and supplies, including food staples, should be purchased and organized in host congregation facility.

Menu planning should be completed, and meal preparers should be notified of their assignments.

Hospitality rooms and guest areas should be cleaned and organized for guest arrival. Religious education classes and youth groups may be recruited to decorate rooms with welcome signs or hand-drawn pictures.

Guest Arrival (Sunday of Host Week)

Coordinators arrive to check congregation facilities and post Guest Guidelines, Emergency Procedures and Telephone Numbers.

Program supplies are delivered to host congregation by Network van. The setup committee should arrive and help set up guests' rooms and make beds.

Guests are given time to unpack and get familiar with their space.

Coordinators hold a site orientation with guests to discuss the host site and acquaint the guests with the building; review emergency procedures, congregation and Network guidelines and answer any questions the guests may have.

D. Recommended Hospitality Schedule

Each evening

5:15-5:30 PM Dinner hosts arrive with meal prepared

(5 Sat & Sun) Host reviews logbook and signs in

Dinner is prepared

Set up dining area

5:30 – 5:45 Guests arrive, settle in and help with setting table

(5 Sat & Sun)

6:00 - 7:00 Dinner is served (hosts eat with guests)

Guests and hosts do dishes and clean up dining room and kitchen

Guests prepare lunches for next day

7:00 Hospitality and fellowship time

Children's activities and homework

8:15 Children under 12 prepare for bed

8:30 Children under 12 in bed, lights out (bedtime can be extended on weekends and summer to 9:30 for children over 5).
 9:15 Children 12 and over prepare for bed
 9:00 Children 12 and over in bed, lights out
 10:45 Adults prepare for bed, clean common area and kitchen
 11:00 Lights out for everyone
 Each host needs to sign in and out and record experience, messages or list of needed items in the logbook.

Each morning

6:00 Wake up guests by knocking on door
 6:15 Guests have light breakfast
 Kitchen and dining room cleanup
 Bathroom cleanup
 6:45/7:00 Van arrives to pick up guests

Saturday

Guests strip beds to have linens and blankets washed.
 Clean linens are given to families to remake beds
 Families prepare belongings for next day move
 Evening host goes through foods with guests to see what can be returned to the day center and what needs to be discarded or put away for the next time.

Moving day

Host collects alarm clocks or other items loaned to guests.
 After guests leave, belongings are organized for move.
 Beds are folded with pillow in the middle, (bed remains made).
 All beds and bins should be labeled with family name (first name only).

Additional Information to be Considered by Each Host Congregation

The IHN manuals are meant to provide a framework for the work of your congregation. Many issues will need to be discussed and decided by each church or synagogue participating in the IHN program. The following outline provides a list of topics that will need your consideration as you plan the program in your church or synagogue.

1. Accommodations
 - What rooms will be used?
 - What bathrooms are available to guests?
 - What storage place is available for unused beds, etc?
 - Is the heating or cooling system on a timer that needs to be adjusted for the week?
2. Security
 - Do any rooms need to be locked? Who is responsible for keeping rooms secure?
 - Overnight security: When to lock up? How?
 - Where are emergency exits? Fire extinguishers?

3. Kitchen

Which pantries/cabinets will be used to store program staples?

How should leftovers be used or distributed? (Most host sites cannot use leftovers because meals are planned for each evening; however guests often like to take leftovers for lunch the next day.)

How do guests access snack foods and drinks?

4. Housekeeping

What specific chores need to be done daily? Weekly?

Whose responsibility are they?

5. Laundry

A washer and dryer are not available for guests at the Day Center. The host congregation is responsible for washing the bed linens which is usually done on Saturdays.

6. Telephone

Are local emergency numbers posted on all phones?

Do all volunteers and guests know how to access the phone in an emergency?

Do volunteers know how to reach the on call staff if the coordinator is not available?

Can incoming calls be received?

7. Guest activities

What supplies, games, books, movies etc. are available for use?

What areas are available for play (indoor/outdoor)? The use of very large rooms is discouraged, as it tends to get the children very aroused and hard to calm for bedtime.

V. During Host Week

A. Policies and Procedures

The major job of the coordination team is to ensure that the program runs smoothly and consistently in accordance with the goals of the Interfaith Hospitality Network. The primary coordinator should monitor all program arrangements to make sure that all is ready in advance of host week. During host week, the coordinator should check in regularly to get to know the guests, and to communicate with the volunteers. He or she should be readily available in case of an emergency or problem requiring action.

All coordinators should understand and be able to implement the policies and procedures in the Volunteer Host Manual and the Guest Handbook. The issues discussed in these books are:

Host staffing

Procedures for guests

Hospitality logbook

Meal preparation

- Housekeeping
- Recreational events and activities
- Donations
- Medications and medical needs
- Medical emergencies
- Parenting issues
- Conduct and discipline
- Smoking, alcohol, and drugs
- Spiritual nurturing
- Confidentiality

Of special importance to coordinators are the hospitality logbook and medical emergency procedures. The logbook must be kept where all volunteers can have easy access. The coordinator should routinely check the logbook for information regarding situations that need attention. In the event of a medical emergency, the procedures listed on the Emergency Numbers Form should be followed. A coordinator should be available to handle any arrangements that need to be made after the guest has been transported to the hospital. The Network on call staff should also be notified by the coordinator of all medical issues needing immediate attention.

B. Problem Management

Undoubtedly, coordinators and hosts will encounter situations not covered in the manuals. The best policy in any unusual or problematic situation is to contact the Network on call staff.

The coordinator will be contacted by the Network Director or Case Manager in advance if a guest needs to go outside of the program guidelines or policy, such as using the host site phone, coming to the host site after 5:30 etc.

The coordinator will be contacted as soon as possible if a family is leaving or a new family is joining the program, however this is not always possible as we often make decisions at the last minute.

If you have any questions at all the best thing to do is to contact the on call staff member and not discuss the issue with the guests as our answers may vary greatly.

Living so closely with new people all the time is difficult. Tension may mount for families in the Network and conflict can occur. Sometime family members may not be getting along or there is a problem between different families. At no time however, should anyone in the program, guests or volunteers, be subjected to physical or verbal abuse. If the situation reaches a point requiring intervention, the coordinator should talk to both parties individually and act as a mediator. If you are uncomfortable at anytime contact the on call staff member immediately; they may speak with the guests involved and/or come to the host site to defuse the situation.

Appendix A
Interfaith Hospitality Network Emergency Procedures

This form with required phone numbers should be posted near all telephones in the congregation hospitality areas.

EACH GUEST HAS AN EMERGENCY PROFILE IN THE LOGBOOK THAT LISTS MEDICATIONS, FAMILY PHYSICIAN, ALLERGIES, AND EMERGENCY CONTACT PERSON.

Site Name _____

Address _____

Phone # (____) _____

EMERGENCIES POLICE _____

FIRE _____

AMBULANCE _____

SITE COORDINATOR: Name _____

Phone (____) _____

SITE COORDINATOR: Name _____

Phone (____) _____

Always contact coordinator first; if unable to contact call the Network on call staff member. Name and phone number is in the logbook.

In Case of Medical Emergencies

1. Phone emergency personal (fire, police, ambulance).
2. Contact the coordinator.
3. If an ambulance is not needed, contact the families' physician for instructions on how to proceed, (go to the emergency room, or start on medication).
4. A host should accompany the guest to the hospital. If a sufficient number of hosts are not present to permit one to go the hospital, call the coordinator. If you are within a short distance you can drop off the guest and have them call when they are finished or a cab can be called if the guest or the congregation can pay the cab fare.
5. Record and date all information in the logbook.