



VOLUNTEER MANUAL

2019 Revised Edition

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WELCOME

Downtown Ministries welcomes you to join our team of volunteers! On behalf of the Board of Directors and the entire staff, we are excited to have you work alongside us building relationships in inner-city Athens. Our desire is that your volunteer experience will challenge you while enriching your life. When you become a volunteer, you will be expected to follow the same guidelines and expectations as our staff while honoring the commitment you make. Thank you for your willingness to be involved—we couldn't do what we do without you!

The following manual presents our Volunteer Policies and Procedures. Downtown Ministries reserves the right to change or update any of the policies or procedures as deemed necessary by our leadership. Copies of any changes will be made available to our volunteers.

OUR MISSION

Downtown Ministries is a non-profit organization that builds consistent relationships with youth and their families in inner-city Athens through programs that demonstrate Christ-centered hope and encouragement.

We serve Athens families through three main avenues:

- **Downtown Sports** including football, cheerleading, basketball, and golf
- **Downtown Academy**, a private education for Kindergarten through 5th Grade
- **Downtown Life** which provides mentoring, tutoring, and other community outreach services

Our programs and activities promote personal and spiritual renewal as well as community restoration. Through these avenues, we build a sphere of influence through which we are able to share the transforming power of the Christian gospel.



WHO WE ARE

Downtown Ministries began as a mission geared toward helping and shaping the inner-city youth of Athens. We offer programs for children ages 4 to 14, but our volunteers often remain involved with our youth on a long-term basis. While we primarily recruit children from the downtown area, we accept youth from across the community. Many of our children are involved in multiple Downtown Ministries programs, giving us the opportunity for a more holistic impact. Our hope is to develop a consistent and authentic presence in their lives during the time that they are with us.

STAFF MEMBER	EMAIL	CONTACT REGARDING...
Chris Byrd, Executive Director	cbyrd@downtownministries.org	the big picture
Cary Rivers, Development Director	crivers@downtownministries.org	our fundraising campaigns
Lora Smothers, Office Manager	lsmothers@downtownministries.org	your application status
Ben Farnsworth, Sports Director	ben@downtownministries.org	Downtown Falcons
Patrick Ennis, Head of School	patrickennis@downtownministries.org	all things Downtown Academy
Jami Washington, Special Programs	jwashington@downtownministries.org	our after school program
Mary Beth Cole, Lunch Buddy Coordinator	mbcole@downtownministries.org	Lunch Buddies
Kate Gross, Cheerleading coach	katherinescrosby@gmail.com	Falcons cheerleaders

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

PROGRAM	SEASON	DESCRIPTION
FOOTBALL	Fall Practice: Tuesdays and Thursdays Games: Saturdays	Coach or help coach sports while encouraging and building relationships with each child. <i>No experience is required!</i>
CHEERLEADING		
BASKETBALL	Winter Practice: Weeknights Games: Weekends	
AFTER SCHOOL PROGRAM	Every school day (3 pm – 5 pm)	Help with homework, outdoor games, and indoor activities. <i>Great for busy college students!</i>
LUNCH BUDDIES	School days during lunch time Once a week (Recommended)	Visit with one Academy child on a regular basis. <i>Great for individuals who can make a longer-term commitment!</i>
CHAPERONES	Early mornings and afternoons	Accompany children on field trips, bus routes, or at recess
ADMIN SUPPORT	As needed	Help with administrative needs in our offices
FALCONS FRIENDS	As needed	Run concessions at games, provide snacks for After-school or our sports teams, volunteer at events like graduation etc.

VOLUNTEER STAGES

DOWNTOWN FRIENDS

Downtown Friends consist of individuals in step one of the volunteer application process that have yet to complete the required application and training. Downtown Friends are not required to fill out a paper application or complete the required training unless they would like to be more directly involved with a program. Downtown Friends are allowed to participate in the following areas:

- Concession Stand/Ticket Sales at football and basketball games
- Snack/M meal providers for Downtown Ministries programs
- Other special events or activities as specified by Program Directors
- Allowed up to two visits per program before going through the entire volunteer process of filling out the application and going through training.

DOWNTOWN VOLUNTEERS

These volunteers, unlike Downtown Friends, are actively involved with the Downtown Ministries children and are dedicated to building relationships with families in inner-city Athens. Downtown Volunteers are required to complete the following:



VOLUNTEER PROCESS

1. PREVIEW (optional)

Before official volunteer commitment begins, potential volunteers (considered Downtown Friends) may attend a group or individual orientation meeting with the respective Program Director of the program(s) with which they wish to volunteer. During this time, the position requirements and expectations will be covered, and a Volunteer Application may be obtained. Downtown Friends will be allowed a maximum of two visits to each program of interest in order to interact with the children and other volunteers to determine if the position is a good fit.

2. APPLICATION

An online application should be completed by visiting www.downtownministries.org/volunteer. Each application will include the following forms:

- Volunteer Program Application – submitted online
- Background Check Authorization Form* - to be printed and submitted by mail or email
- Volunteer Driver Application (optional) – to be printed and submitted by mail or email

3. VOLUNTEER TRAINING

All volunteers are required to go through training so that he or she is better equipped to work with inner-city youth. Once an application is submitted, a Downtown Ministries staff member will contact the volunteer with training information, including Darkness to Light instructions and setting up a meeting with a Downtown Ministries staff member. Volunteers must complete the application and training within the first two weeks of volunteering. Volunteers who do not complete the training may be asked to wait to volunteer until the training is complete.

Downtown Ministries Volunteer Training* will consist of two portions:

1. A 1-hour *Darkness to Light: Stewards of Children* sexual abuse prevention program. This online training may count as Continuing Education Credits in some professions and often counts as volunteer hours for some undergraduate course work. Volunteers will receive documentation of having completed the program for future reference or needs.
2. A 20-minute session led by the Volunteer Coordinator that will cover our Policies and Procedures.

**There is a suggested donation of \$10 with the application to cover the cost of background checks and training materials.*

POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

A. Reporting Abuse Policy

Effective July 1, 2012, Georgia's mandated reporter statute (O.C.G.A. 19-7-5) expanded the categories of those individuals required to report child abuse and clarified the existing definitions of mandated reporters.

According to this Code,

"Abused" is defined as subjected to child abuse.

"Child" is defined as any person under 18 years of age.

"Child abuse" means

- (a) Physical injury or death inflicted upon a child by a parent or caretaker thereof by other than accidental means; provided, however, that physical forms of discipline may be used as long as there is no physical injury to the child;
- (b) Neglect or exploitation of a child by a parent or caretaker thereof;
- (c) Sexual abuse of a child; or
- (d) Sexual exploitation of a child.

"Child service organization personnel" now includes employees or volunteers in the public, private, for-profit and non-profit sectors that provide "care, treatment, education, training, supervision, coaching, counseling, recreational programs, or shelter to children." This directly impacts all volunteers with Downtown Ministries as the expansion and clarification of "child service organization personnel" means any person employed by or volunteering at a business or organization is now included in the mandated reporter statute and is hence a mandated reporter.

The statute requires that an oral report be provided to Department of Human Services (DHS)/Division of Family and Children Services (DFCS) within 24 hours of the time the reporter learns of the suspected abuse or maltreatment. In accordance with this law, Downtown Ministries has developed a reporting protocol to protect its volunteers and employees from breaches of confidentiality, as well as to maintain consistency in reporting suspicions of abuse.

Downtown Ministries' policy for reporting suspected abuse or maltreatment is as follows:

1. All volunteers suspecting abuse or maltreatment should make the suspicion known by making an oral report upon suspecting abuse.
2. Oral reports should be made to the appropriate Program Director to which a participating child belongs at the time abuse is suspected (e.g. if a child who attends the After School-Program is suspected to have been a victim of abuse, a report should be made to the After-School Program Director; if a basketball player is suspected to have been a victim of abuse, a report should be made to the Director of Sports).
 - If a volunteer finds a conflict of interest in reporting the suspected abuse to the Program Director, he or she may report to the Volunteer Coordinator or another Program Director who is present and available.
 - If a volunteer has questions or concerns about what constitutes abuse, he or she may refer to the previously defined terms or consult the Volunteer Coordinator or a Program Director.

3. Oral reports should be accompanied by a written report and submitted to the respective Program Director within 24 hours that will include the following information (per O.C.G.A. 19-7-5):
 - Names and addresses of the child and the child's parents or caretakers,
 - The child's age,
 - The nature and extent of the child's injuries (including any evidence of previous injuries),
 - And any other information that the reporting person believes might be helpful in establishing the cause of the injuries and the identity of the perpetrator.
 - Photographs of the child's injuries to be used as documentation in support of allegations may be taken without the permission of the child's parent or guardian.
4. The respective Program Director shall make an oral report to DFCS within the 24-hour time period set by O.C.G.A. 19-7-5.
5. The respective Program Director will review and file the written report with the Volunteer Coordinator. The report shall be secured in a locked area, and the identity of the reporter shall be kept confidential in accordance with O.C.G.A. 19-7-5.

B. INCIDENT REPORTING POLICY

In the event of an incident involving physical injury, property damage or other conflict or emergency, the employee, staff member, or volunteer who discovers, witnesses, or receives report of the event should be responsible for documenting the incident. That individual must immediately (once the situation has been stabilized) report the incident by:

1. Contacting the Program Director associated with the individual involved in the incident, or the Program Director in charge during the occurrence. This should be completed within one hour of the occurrence.
2. Completing the Incident Report Form (provided by a Program Director) and submitting it to the Volunteer Coordinator. This should be completed within 24 hours of the occurrence.

The incident report should be objective and contain only observed facts. Conclusions, opinions, accusations, or admissions of wrongdoing should not be included. An incident report is not to document blame, but rather record the details of the incident in order to preserve the information for risk management purposes.

The following details are important items that should be included in the report:

- Date, day of the week, time, and location of the incident
- Who was involved in the incident
- How the incident occurred
- What measures were and are being taken in response to the incident
- Name(s) and contact information for witness(es)

At Downtown Academy, a First Aid Kit can be found in the front office. First Aid Kits will also be present at sporting events. Directors are aware of medical issues and are equipped to handle medical situations.

C. INCLEMENT WEATHER POLICY

The safety of children and volunteers is very important to us. In the event of inclement weather or unsafe road conditions, Downtown Ministries may cancel, postpone, or reschedule a regularly scheduled event. If there is a cancellation or postponement, the respective Program Directors will contact the volunteers to inform them of the change. Program Directors may ask volunteers to inform certain program participants of the cancellation. As able, there will be social media posts on Twitter and Facebook, and updates made to our website announcing the event's cancellation.

D. NEEDS AWARENESS POLICY

Due to the realities of poverty that many of our participants face each day, the needs of our youth and their families can sometimes be overwhelming. Participants or their family members may ask volunteers to help meet a variety of needs or provide favors (e.g. money, car rides, groceries, etc.). Volunteers are not required to help meet the needs of participants or their family members beyond the expectations outlined in the Volunteer Manual. Downtown Ministries will not reimburse volunteers for any such purchases.

At times, the needs of our participants and their family members may need to be referred to a Downtown Ministries staff member so a more permanent intervention can be put into place. If a volunteer is unsure whether a need requires ongoing attention, he or she should consult the Program Director for which he or she is volunteering.

In an effort to love and serve our children and their families most effectively, please feel free to discuss any situation or question you may encounter regarding the needs of our children and families with any Program Director.

E. REIMBURSEMENT POLICY

Downtown Ministries will not reimburse a volunteer for purchases he or she elects to make, such as meals for participants, gasoline, or any other associated program needs. If a volunteer identifies a specific program's need, he or she should contact the respective Program Director. The Program Director may then use discretion in making purchases within the program's budget.

F. DRIVING POLICY

Any volunteer who is interested in being a driver for Downtown Ministries must complete each component of the Volunteer Driver Application Form and submit all required documentation:

- A copy of a valid driver's license should be submitted by July 15 of each year.
- A copy of current automobile insurance coverage should be submitted by July 15 of each year.
 - A volunteer's automobile insurance policy will be the primary insurance coverage for the volunteer (driver), the volunteer's vehicle, and all occupants of the volunteer's vehicle.
 - Any changes in the insurance provider or policy coverage should be submitted within 15 days of the effective date of the new policy change.

Volunteer drivers must also be aware of the following policies for transporting program participants:

- Volunteer drivers are expected to obey all traffic laws.
- Volunteer drivers may only provide transportation to those Downtown Ministries participants who have a current, signed parental/guardian consent form on file.
- During transport, all participants must be seated and secured with an individual working seatbelt. No “double belting” of children is permitted.
- Volunteer drivers are asked to exercise authority and proper guidance over the participants they transport while also carrying out the mission of Downtown Ministries. Volunteers should monitor conversations and music/lyrics for appropriateness, and redirect if necessary.
- The safety of all volunteers and participants is of utmost importance. Volunteers should report any injuries, illnesses, discipline problems, or other concerns to the respective Program Director.
- If a volunteer driver receives a citation while transporting any Downtown Ministries’ participant(s), it is considered an “incident.” The volunteer must adhere to the Incident Reporting Policy (see Policy B, page 1) which states that the volunteer should immediately notify the Program Director to which the participant(s) belong(s) and submit an Incident Report within 24 hours of the occurrence. Additionally, a copy of the citation should be submitted with the completed Incident Report.
 - Documented incidents of speeding or unsafe driving may result in formal review by the Executive Director and loss of future driving privileges.

Further, according to Georgia law on safety restraints for children (O.C.G.A. 40-8-76):

- Every driver who transports a child under 8 years of age shall provide for the proper restraint in a child passenger restraining system, such as a car seat or booster seat, that is appropriate for the child’s height and weight.
- Any child who is under 8 years of age or whose height is less than 4’9” (57 inches) should ride in the backseat of a motor vehicle and use a passenger restraining system.
- A child under 8 years of age may only be in the front seat when the vehicle has no rear seating position appropriate for correctly restraining a child, or all appropriate rear seating positions are occupied by other children.

G. SOCIAL NETWORKING POLICY

Downtown Ministries acknowledges that volunteers may participate in, use, or access social networking sites, including but not limited to Facebook, MySpace, Twitter, YouTube, Instagram, and LinkedIn, as well as create or maintain personal websites and blogs. Downtown Ministries respects volunteers’ online social networking and personal internet use; however, be aware that your online presence may directly or indirectly reflect upon Downtown Ministries. Volunteers should be mindful of online communications, including word choice, images, posts, comments, or other site-specific functions, as your affiliation with Downtown Ministries reflects on the organization at large, as well as the specific programs, participants and family members, staff members, and other volunteers. Any belief that is incongruent with those expressed in the Downtown Ministries Volunteer Manual should not be posted without the inclusion of the following statement:

“The opinions expressed here are my own and do not necessarily represent the views of Downtown Ministries.”

Volunteers should adhere to the following guidelines, with an understanding that violating any of these may result in a staff member requesting that the issue of concern be removed, disaffiliation with Downtown Ministries through internet use, and/or termination from your volunteer position with Downtown Ministries:

- Anything that may harm the goodwill or reputation of Downtown Ministries, its program participants and family members, volunteers, or staff members.
- Any discriminatory, harassing, or other harmful information concerning any of Downtown Ministries, its program participants and family members, volunteers, or staff members.
- Any confidential information, such as finances, marketing, or operational methods, obtained during your volunteering with Downtown Ministries, including information relating to its program participants and family members, volunteers, or staff members.
- Any private or similar identifying information relating to Downtown Ministries, its program participants and family members, volunteers, or staff members.
- Note: The best way to avoid a violation of this policy is to refrain from posting pictures of Downtown Ministries children altogether.

H. PUBLIC STATEMENT POLICY

Downtown Ministries' commitment to serving inner-city youth and their families has received media attention. While we encourage our volunteers to share the work of the organization, in order to ensure a consistent message is conveyed to the public, volunteers should refrain from making formal statements regarding Downtown Ministries, its programs, program participants and family members, volunteers, or staff members without the expressed verbal or written permission from a Program Director.

I. DRESS POLICY

Volunteers should come dressed and prepared for the respective program. Volunteer dress should set a good example for the children involved. During the school day at Downtown Academy, for example, tutors should come dressed professionally. During After School, however, volunteers may be dressed more casually (but still appropriately) as they may play outdoors with the children. Any questions about appropriate dress may contact the Volunteer Coordinator or respective Program Director.

J. ATTENDANCE POLICY

Volunteers play a vital role in bringing hope to the families of inner-city Athens. While we understand that volunteers are here on a voluntary basis, we ask that volunteers remember that many of the children in our population come from unstable environments and one of the ways we can support our children is through consistency. We highly encourage volunteers to create a schedule and stick with it. This is beneficial to you, but also to the children you serve. If situations arise in which you are unable to come, please contact the respective Program Director.

K. CONFIDENTIALITY POLICY

While working with the children of Downtown Ministries, volunteers may encounter confidential information about participants that should not be shared with other people. Downtown Ministries seeks to provide a safe place for the children of inner-city Athens to learn and grow. This is only possible if the people around them can be trusted; therefore, volunteers should not share confidential information with others nor ask questions concerning such information of the Downtown Ministries staff members. Confidential information includes, but is not limited to the following:

- Participant's home life or situations
- Participant's behavioral or learning differences
- Participant's address, phone number, or other contact information

CODE OF CONDUCT & RECEIPT OF POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

It is expected that upon completing the application and training process, all volunteers of Downtown Ministries should conduct themselves in a manner that represents the vision and mission of Downtown Ministries when interacting with individuals who are also involved in the organization, at both Downtown Ministries and non-Downtown Ministries events or programs.

In accordance with this expectation, I agree to the following:

- I will attempt to fulfill to the best of my ability the required commitment of volunteering for 12 weeks (or one semester) for a program.
- If I cannot honor my volunteer commitment for any given day or event, I will notify the respective staff member as far in advance as possible so that he or she may have time to make appropriate arrangements.
- I will accept the staff's leadership, guidance, and decisions.
- I will honor the privacy of Downtown Ministries' participants and their family members.
- I have read the Downtown Ministries Volunteer Manual and understand my role as a volunteer.
- I have this day received a copy of Downtown Ministries' Volunteer Policies and Procedures, and I understand that I am responsible for reading the policies and practices described within it.
- I agree to abide by the policies and procedures contained in this document. I understand that the policies, procedures, and benefits contained in this document may be added to, deleted, or changed by Downtown Ministries at any time. I understand that neither this document nor any other written or verbal communication by any program director or other Downtown Ministries staff member is intended to in any way create a contract of employment.
- I understand that my volunteer involvement is at-will, which permits Downtown Ministries to terminate the relationship at any time, for any reason, with or without notice. Nothing in this handbook is intended to guarantee volunteer involvement for a specific duration. Downtown Ministries will not modify their policy of involvement-at-will in any case.
- If I have any questions regarding the content or interpretation of this document, I will bring them to the attention of a Downtown Ministries' staff member.

VOLUNTEER APPLICATION CHECKLIST

- ☐ Preview the program(s) with which you are interested in volunteering. (optional)
- ☐ Complete all portions of the online Volunteer Application, including the following:
 - ☐ Volunteer Program Application
 - ☐ Volunteer Background Check Authorization*
 - ☐ Volunteer Driver Application (optional)
Please include a copy of your Driver's License and Insurance information
- ☐ Meet with the Volunteer Coordinator for Volunteer Training.*
- ☐ Complete the online *Darkness to Light: Stewards of Children* sexual abuse prevention training and email your certificate of completion to info@downtownministries.org.
- ☐ Discuss your weekly schedule for your volunteer service hours with the respective Program Director(s).

**There is a suggested donation of \$10 along with your completed application to cover the cost of background checks and training materials.*

VOLUNTEER RESPONSIBILITIES

- Keep the Program Director informed of any concerns or problems that arise during your volunteer experience.
- Report any physical injuries or property damage to the Program Director and submit an incident report within the designated timeframe.
- Let the appropriate staff member know if you will be unable to come at a scheduled time.
- Ensure our Volunteer Coordinator has updated information in your application at all times (e.g. driver's license, address, car insurance, etc.).