



Catholic Social Services Volunteer Handbook



Volunteer guidance, expectations, and agreement

Effective September 10th, 2026

Anchorage, Alaska

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Welcome

To Our Valued Volunteers,

You. Are. Awesome.

Thank you for choosing to volunteer with Catholic Social Services! We are grateful to have you as part of our team. Volunteers are essential to our mission, and without your generosity, many of the services we provide to our community would not be possible.

Whether you're planting flowers at our Main Center, packing food boxes at St. Francis House, serving meals at Brother Francis Shelter, providing enrichment activities at Clare House, or serving in another role, your time and talents make a meaningful difference. Every act of service helps strengthen our community and brings hope to those we serve.

At CSS, we want every volunteer to have a rewarding and meaningful experience. We value your feedback, enjoy hearing your stories, and are committed to creating an environment where you feel welcomed, supported, and appreciated.

This handbook provides an overview of Catholic Social Services, your responsibilities as a volunteer, and the policies and procedures that help ensure a safe, respectful, and positive experience for everyone. Please read it carefully and refer to it whenever you have questions about your volunteer service.

Because no handbook can anticipate every situation, CSS reserves the right to revise, supplement, or discontinue any policy or procedure described in this handbook as organizational or legal needs change. When practical, volunteers will be informed of significant updates.

Thank you for sharing your time, talents, and compassion with Catholic Social Services. Together, we are making a lasting difference in the lives of our neighbors.

With gratitude and appreciation,

The Catholic Social Services Team

Agency Mission

The mission of Catholic Social Services is to promote the physical, spiritual and mental welfare of persons in need in the community.

Our Catholic Identity

Catholic Social Services (CSS) serves those in need by working to end poverty, create opportunity, and advocate for just communities. Each year, our programs serve more than **10,000 children, families, and individuals** across Alaska.

Since our founding in 1966, CSS has grown in response to unmet community needs. Today, we provide shelter, meals, employment assistance, behavioral health services, veteran support services, refugee and immigration assistance, services for individuals with disabilities and more.

Together with our staff, volunteers, donors, and community collaborators, we work to improve the quality of life for our neighbors and strengthen our communities.

Our Catholic Affiliation

Many people ask whether Catholic Social Services serves only Catholics. The answer is **no**.

While CSS is a Catholic agency and the official social service ministry of the Archdiocese of Anchorage-Juneau, **we provide services to anyone, regardless of their religious affiliation.**

While CSS is separately incorporated, we carry out the Church's mission of serving the poor and the vulnerable. The Executive Director of CSS is responsible to the archbishop for the mission of the agency and works with the Board of Trustees, who has fiduciary responsibility and oversight of the Agency.

Our mission is inspired by the Gospel and guided by **Catholic Social Teaching**. These teachings are not about requiring others to be Catholic or participate in religious activities. Rather, they embody the principles of justice, compassion, and human dignity that guide how we serve every person.

As a volunteer, you do not need to be Catholic. We simply ask that you respect and support the values that guide our work:

- **Life and dignity of the human person** – We serve all of our clients with the dignity and respect every human deserves.
- **Call to family, community and participation** – We engage the public to participate in the delivery of services in order to create a stronger, tighter community.
- **Rights and responsibilities** – We recognize that every individual has the right to a dignified, decent life. We strive to provide this life to every citizen of Anchorage.
- **Option for the poor and vulnerable** – We believe it's our community's moral obligation to place the poor and vulnerable first.

- **Dignity of work and the rights of workers** – We believe that everyone deserves access to honest compensation for work, no matter their background.
- **Solidarity** – We believe one human family exists, regardless of national, racial, ethnic, economic and ideological differences.
- **Care for God’s creation** – We believe caring for our environment is just as important as caring for our fellow humans.

CSS receives funding from a variety of public and private sources. Consistent with our mission and funding requirements, we do not discriminate in providing services and never require participation in religious activities as a condition of receiving assistance. We welcome every person with dignity, respect, and compassion.

Equal Opportunity

Any volunteer with questions or concerns about any type of discrimination in the workplace is encouraged to bring these issues to the attention of their program’s volunteer representative or the Community Engagement Manager. On request, we can provide you with a copy of the CSS policy on equal opportunity and anti-discrimination.

Open Door Policy

CSS welcomes questions, comments, and feedback from volunteers. Volunteers are encouraged to speak with their Program Director or another appropriate member of management whenever they have a question, concern, or matter they would like to discuss. Please understand that, depending on availability, staff may need to schedule a time to meet rather than being available on a walk-in basis.

Volunteer Definitions

Individual Volunteers

- Individual volunteers assist on a regular basis in a position that is ongoing.

Special Event Volunteers

- Special event volunteers assist with events and projects happening at CSS. Examples include helping at Charity Ball, Thanksgiving Blessing or RAIS workshops.

Direct Service Volunteers

- Direct Service Volunteers provide services directly to clients. RAIS volunteers often fall in this category.

Group Volunteers

- Group volunteers are a group of individuals, often businesses or church groups, who would like to volunteer together for a single day. CSS does our best to accommodate

group volunteers. However, we sometimes cannot. The group volunteer process requires a group application be submitted. Background checks are generally not required. If you are interested in volunteering with your group, please reach out to the Community Engagement Manager and we will work with your group to make a placement. Not all groups can be placed.

Professional Liability

Volunteers acting within the scope of their assigned duties on behalf of Catholic Social Services may be covered under the agency's liability insurance policy. Coverage is subject to the terms, conditions, and limitations of the policy. For additional information regarding coverage, please contact the Community Engagement Manager.

Becoming a Volunteer

Job Descriptions

Volunteer position descriptions are available on the CSS website and are reviewed with volunteers by the CSS staff member providing oversight of the volunteer assignment. Position descriptions are intended to outline general responsibilities and may be modified at any time at the discretion of CSS to meet organizational needs. Volunteer positions are reviewed and updated as needed.

Orientation and Training

Volunteers will receive orientation and training as appropriate for their assigned role. The Community Engagement Manager will provide orientation to CSS policies and procedures. Program staff supervising the volunteer will provide role-specific training, review job duties and program expectations, introduce the volunteer to staff, and review any applicable program policies and procedures.

Background Checks

CSS programs are governed by local, State and/or Federal requirements for volunteering. CSS adheres to barrier crimes as defined by the State of Alaska Background Check Unit.

CSS conducts background checks that may include review of state court records. Information obtained through a background check or related investigation will be treated as confidential and shared only on a need-to-know basis.

Volunteers must notify the Community Engagement Manager immediately if they are convicted of a misdemeanor or felony while actively volunteering with CSS.

Background checks generally do not need to be repeated unless there has been a lapse of more than three years in volunteer service. However, CSS reserves the right to conduct an additional background check at any time when required by law, regulation, program requirements, or agency policy.

Volunteer Expectations

Attendance and Punctuality

Inform the program's volunteer representative or the Community Engagement Manager of an absence of at least 24 hours in advance. In case of illness or emergency, please notify CSS staff at your volunteer site as soon as possible.

Signing in upon arrival at the volunteer site is required. Volunteers must use the standard sign-in process established for their assigned location.

Personal Appearance

Volunteers are expected to maintain a neat, clean, and professional appearance appropriate to their assigned role. Appropriate attire helps maintain a safe, respectful, and professional environment and reflects the standards of Catholic Social Services.

Volunteers are expected to maintain good personal hygiene and wear clean, neat, and appropriate attire for their volunteer assignment. Clothing must be professional, non-revealing, and suitable for the work environment. Apparel displaying offensive, discriminatory, sexually explicit, or otherwise inappropriate language, images, or advertising (including references to alcohol, illegal drugs, or weapons) is prohibited.

The Community Engagement Manager or the supervising program staff member has the authority to determine whether a volunteer's attire is appropriate for the assignment and may require a volunteer to change clothing or discontinue the volunteer activity if the attire is deemed unsuitable.

Professional Boundaries

Volunteers are expected to treat all clients with dignity, respect, and compassion. Corporal punishment, degrading treatment, harassment, or any form of abusive behavior is strictly prohibited.

Volunteers are encouraged to establish rapport with clients but should always maintain appropriate professional boundaries. Unless specifically authorized as part of their volunteer role (such as Family Mentors or other designated positions), volunteers should not share

personal contact information, connect with clients on social media, or develop personal relationships with clients. Any exceptions will be outlined in the volunteer position description or training.

Social Media & Online Public Conduct

Catholic Social Services values the privacy and dignity of our clients, volunteers, and staff, as well as the agency's reputation in the community. Volunteers may not post photos, videos, stories, or other information about clients, staff, or agency operations on personal social media accounts without prior authorization.

When using social media or other online platforms, volunteers are expected to exercise good judgment and maintain confidentiality at all times. Any online activity related to CSS should reflect the agency's values and respect the privacy of those we serve.

Volunteers are expected to comply with the agency's social media and **Confidentiality Policies**, which is available upon request from the Community Engagement Manager.

Legal Responsibility for Online Conduct

Volunteers are personally responsible for the content they post on social media and other online platforms. Online posts that are defamatory, harassing, obscene, unlawful, or that violate another person's intellectual property or privacy rights may result in personal legal liability.

When using social media, volunteers should exercise good judgment and avoid speculation, misleading statements, offensive language, unauthorized use of copyrighted material, disclosure of confidential or private information, or false or derogatory statements about individuals or organizations.

Volunteers must respect copyright laws and obtain appropriate permission before using another person's image, content, or other protected material.

Catholic Social Services reserves the right to discontinue a volunteer's service if their online conduct violates the law, breaches confidentiality, conflicts with this or other agency policies, misrepresents the organization, or otherwise interferes with the mission, operations, or relationships of Catholic Social Services.

Solicitation and Proselytizing

Volunteers may not solicit donations, sell products or services, distribute promotional materials, or engage in religious or political proselytizing at Catholic Social Services facilities or directly with clients while serving in a volunteer capacity.

Tobacco-Free Facility & Grounds

Volunteers may not use tobacco products in any form inside any CSS facility, in CSS-owned or leased vehicles, or anywhere on CSS property, including parking areas.

Volunteer Conduct

To ensure orderly operations and provide the best possible work environment, CSS expects volunteers to follow rules of conduct that will protect the interests and safety of all in the organization.

It is not possible to list all the forms of behavior that are considered unacceptable in the workplace, but the following are examples of conduct that may result in being released from their volunteer assignment.

- Theft or inappropriate removal or possession of property
- Working under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs
- Possession, distribution, sale, transfer, or use of alcohol or illegal drugs in the workplace, while on duty, or while operating employer-owned vehicles or equipment
- Fighting or threatening violence in the workplace
- Disruptive activity in the workplace
- Negligence or improper conduct leading to damage of employer-, client-, or customer-owned property
- Insubordination or other disrespectful conduct
- Violation of safety or health rules
- Smoking in prohibited areas
- Sexual or other unlawful or unwelcome harassment
- Possession of dangerous or unauthorized materials, such as explosives or firearms, in the workplace
- Unauthorized use of phones, mail system, computers, or other employer-owned equipment
- Unauthorized disclosure of business confidential information
- Violation of personnel policies
- Unsatisfactory performance or conduct

Volunteering with CSS is at the mutual consent of CSS and the volunteer, and either party may terminate that relationship at any time, with or without cause, and with or without advance notice.

Policies & Procedures

Personnel Records and Privacy

CSS maintains a personnel file for three years from the last date of volunteering. The personnel file contains a volunteer application. Personnel files are considered confidential files and are the property of CSS. Volunteers may request a copy of the contents of their file. Volunteers are responsible for informing the Community Engagement Manager of contact information updates.

Timekeeping

Volunteers are required to accurately sign in and out for each volunteer shift using the designated timekeeping process. Volunteer hours are considered in-kind donations and may be used to meet grant matching requirements and measure the impact of volunteer service. Volunteers serving off-site must also track and report their hours to the Community Engagement Manager or other designated CSS staff member.

Gift Acceptance

Volunteers should use good judgment when offered a gift by a client and are encouraged to consult their supervising staff member if they are unsure how to respond.

- Volunteers may not accept cash, gift cards, or other items of monetary value.
- Modest, handmade, or symbolic gifts may be accepted when appropriate and, whenever possible, should be shared or displayed within the program for everyone to enjoy.
- Food may be accepted at the volunteer's discretion, provided there are no health or safety concerns.
- If you are uncertain whether it is appropriate to accept a gift, consult your supervising staff member before accepting it.

Safety & Risk Management

Safety Concern

Volunteers are expected to report unsafe conditions promptly. If the situation presents an immediate safety risk, notify CSS staff on site immediately. Non-urgent safety concerns may be reported by submitting a [Safety Concern Form](#) through the CSS website.

Signing In

Signing in allows staff and emergency personnel to account for you if there is a major event. For your safety, please sign in as soon as you arrive at your volunteer assignment.

Volunteer Accident Insurance

CSS provides volunteer accident insurance at no cost to volunteers for injuries that occur while performing approved volunteer activities. This coverage is secondary to the volunteer's personal health insurance and may reimburse eligible expenses not covered by other insurance.

Volunteers must report any injury or accident to the Community Engagement Manager or supervising CSS staff member within 24 hours of the incident. An accident report and any required insurance claim forms must be completed as directed.

Reporting Incidents:

- CSS requires that all injuries be reported immediately to on-site staff and within twenty-four hours to the Community Engagement Manager.
- The on-site staff should have the following form completed and turned into Human Resources. [Volunteers Accident Claim Form](#)

Animals at Volunteer Events

On occasion, animals may be included as part of an approved volunteer event at a CSS facility. Any request to bring an animal onto CSS property must be submitted to and approved in advance by the Community Engagement Manager in coordination with the applicable Program Director or Manager. Clients and staff must receive at least **48 hours' advance notice** before the event.

To minimize health and safety risks, the animal must remain in a designated, controlled area to limit exposure for individuals with allergies, phobias, medical conditions, or other sensitivities.

Event organizers and volunteers are responsible for ensuring the animal is appropriately supervised and does not pose a risk to clients, staff, volunteers, or visitors. Additional restrictions or safety requirements may be imposed based on the program, population served, or facility.

At the conclusion of the event, the designated area must be thoroughly cleaned and sanitized by CSS staff or the volunteer responsible for the event in accordance with agency expectations.

The Community Engagement Manager and agency leadership reserve the right to deny or revoke approval for any animal at any time if they determine its presence may create a health, safety, operational, or liability risk, or otherwise interfere with agency operations or the well-being of clients, staff, volunteers, or visitors.

Driving/Transportation

Required insurance coverage for those who drive their personal vehicles for volunteer-related purposes is the state minimum. Vehicles must be in safe operating condition.

Volunteers must provide a copy of their current driver's license and insurance card for each vehicle they drive when volunteering and agree to send the Community Engagement Manager updated copies when they expire.

The following are general rules that must be followed by any volunteer driving for CSS.

- Volunteers may not drive CSS vehicles.
- The driver and all occupants of the vehicle must follow all applicable laws regarding the use of a seat belt.
- Obey all street signs and stop lights, or directions from a police officer or construction crew member.
- Use of cell phones while driving is prohibited. A Bluetooth, or a hands-free device tool can be used if necessary. If you must take a call while in the vehicle, pull over to talk on the phone.
- No smoking is allowed in a personal vehicle if they are transporting a client or other volunteer.

Weapons and Firearms: No Weapons Allowed

Volunteers may not possess, carry, or bring firearms, weapons, or other dangerous items onto CSS property or to any CSS-sponsored event or activity. Prohibited items include, but are not limited to, firearms, BB or pellet guns, stun guns, explosives, knives (other than those required for an approved volunteer assignment), clubs, brass knuckles, and other items intended or designed to cause harm.

Volunteers may be asked to present personal belongings for inspection when there is reasonable suspicion that a prohibited item or safety hazard is present. Participation in any search is voluntary. A volunteer who refuses a requested inspection may be denied access to CSS property or volunteer activities. If there is reason to believe a crime has occurred or an immediate safety threat exists, CSS may contact law enforcement.

Harassment

CSS is committed to providing a volunteer environment free from harassment, discrimination, and retaliation. Harassment or inappropriate conduct based on race, color, national origin, ethnicity, religion, sex, pregnancy, age, disability, marital status, or any other characteristic protected by law will not be tolerated. Volunteers are expected to treat all clients, staff, volunteers, and visitors with dignity and respect.

Volunteers who experience, witness, or become aware of harassment, discrimination, or sexual misconduct must report it promptly to their program supervisor. If the supervisor is unavailable or the volunteer is uncomfortable reporting to that person, the volunteer should immediately notify the Community Engagement Manager or another member of agency leadership.

Preventing Workplace Violence

CSS is committed to providing a safe environment for volunteers, clients, staff, and visitors. The agency maintains a **zero-tolerance policy** for workplace violence, including intimidation, threats, harassment, coercion, or acts of violence.

All individuals must be treated with dignity and respect. Volunteers are expected to refrain from fighting, horseplay, threatening behavior, or any conduct that could endanger others. Threatening statements, jokes about violence, or behavior that creates fear or intimidation will not be tolerated.

Volunteers must immediately report any threat of violence, act of violence, or other safety concern to their supervising staff member or any member of management. This includes incidents involving employees, volunteers, clients, vendors, contractors, or members of the public. In an emergency or if there is an immediate threat to safety, call 911 first and then notify CSS staff as soon as it is safe to do so.

Reporting Incidents

Volunteers should report any threat of violence, act of violence, or suspicious activity as soon as it is safe to do so. Reports should be as detailed as possible and documented using the CSS Incident Report Form with assistance from a CSS staff member, if needed.

Volunteers should never place themselves at risk by attempting to intervene in a violent or potentially dangerous situation. If there is an immediate threat to safety, call 911, move to a safe location, and notify CSS staff as soon as possible.

CSS will promptly investigate all reports of violence, threats, or suspicious activity and will make reasonable efforts to protect the confidentiality of those who report concerns, consistent with the need to conduct a thorough investigation.

Volunteers who engage in violence, make threats, or otherwise violate this policy may be removed from volunteer service immediately and may be referred to law enforcement when appropriate.

Volunteers are encouraged to raise concerns or conflicts with their supervising staff member, the Human Resources Director or the Community Engagement Manager before they escalate. CSS is committed to resolving concerns in a respectful and timely manner and prohibits retaliation against anyone who reports a safety concern in good faith.

Complaint Procedure

Volunteers who have a concern or grievance are encouraged to discuss it with their supervising staff member or the Community Engagement Manager. CSS will review concerns in a fair and timely manner.

This grievance process does not apply to former volunteers who have not been active with CSS for more than three years and does not apply to decisions regarding the termination of a volunteer assignment, which are at the sole discretion of CSS.

Non-Retaliation

CSS prohibits retaliation against any volunteer who, in good faith, reports suspected harassment, discrimination, misconduct, or other policy violations, or who participates in an investigation. Volunteers will not be penalized for making a good faith report, even if the allegation is ultimately determined to be unsubstantiated.

Working with Clients

Trauma Informed Practice

CSS is committed to providing services through a trauma-informed approach. Volunteers are expected to recognize that many of the people we serve have experienced trauma and to interact with clients in ways that promote healing, dignity, and respect while avoiding re-traumatization.

Volunteers should apply the following trauma-informed principles in their interactions:

- **Safety:** Help create an environment where clients feel physically and emotionally safe.
- **Trust and Transparency:** Be honest, respectful, and consistent in your interactions.
- **Collaboration:** Work alongside clients and staff in a respectful, supportive manner.

- **Empowerment, Voice, and Choice:** Respect each person's autonomy, strengths, and ability to make decisions whenever possible.
- **Peer Support:** Value the role of lived experience and supportive relationships in promoting healing.

Above all, volunteers should be patient, actively listen, demonstrate empathy, avoid judgment, and treat every individual with compassion and respect. Recognize that behavior may be influenced by past trauma, and respond in a calm, supportive, and professional manner.

Confidential Client Information

CSS and its programs comply with all applicable laws and regulations governing the confidentiality of client information, including information maintained in paper and electronic records. All volunteers are required to sign a Confidentiality Agreement before beginning service and must protect the privacy of all clients and agency information encountered during their volunteer activities.

Volunteers may not photograph, video record, or otherwise capture images of clients. Only authorized CSS staff may take photographs or recordings of clients after confirming that all required consent and media release forms have been obtained.

Statement of Confidentiality

CSS is committed to protecting the privacy and confidentiality of every client. Volunteers must maintain the confidentiality of all client and agency information obtained through their volunteer service and **may not disclose the identity of any client or discuss client information with unauthorized individuals.** If asked to provide information about a client, volunteers must refer the request to authorized CSS staff for review and approval.

CSS does not confirm whether an individual is receiving services, disclose client information without appropriate authorization or legal authority, or share client records except as permitted by law. Volunteers must never access, use, or disclose confidential information except as required to perform their assigned volunteer duties.

All volunteers are required to sign a Confidentiality Agreement before beginning service. Any suspected or actual breach of confidentiality must be reported immediately to a supervising staff member or the Community Engagement Manager.

CSS complies with all applicable federal, state, and local confidentiality laws and regulations, including the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA), where applicable. Violations of this policy may result in removal from volunteer service and other appropriate action.

Reporting Abuse and Neglect

CSS complies with all applicable mandatory reporting laws and regulations.

Volunteers serving in unsupervised roles must complete the Alaska Mandatory Reporter Training and provide their completion certificate to the Community Engagement Manager.

Volunteers who suspect child abuse, child neglect, or abuse, neglect, or exploitation of a vulnerable adult must report their concerns immediately.

- Volunteers serving in supervised settings should notify the on-site CSS staff member without delay.
- Volunteers serving in unsupervised roles are expected to follow Alaska's mandatory reporting requirements and notify both the appropriate authorities, when required by law, The Program Director and the Community Engagement Manager as soon as possible.

Free Mandatory Reporter Training is available through the Alaska Department of Family and Community Services, Office of Children's Services.

Ending Volunteer Service

If you need to end your volunteer assignment, please notify the Community Engagement Manager as soon as possible. We understand that circumstances may arise that make it difficult or impossible to continue your current commitment. If you would like to explore a different volunteer role within CSS, the Community Engagement Manager can also help you identify other available opportunities.

Volunteer Agreement

CSS mission: promote physical, spiritual, and mental welfare of persons in need in the community.

A link to the Volunteer Handbook is available on our website at cssalaska.org on the volunteer page. I have been oriented to key aspects of it as indicated below.

Please initial as we discuss:

- _____ **Volunteer job description**
- _____ **Orientation & training**
- _____ **Background checks (and driving forms, if applicable)**
- _____ **Tracking volunteer hours**
- _____ **No weapons allowed**
- _____ **Sexual or other harassment**
- _____ **Trauma informed language/perspective**
- _____ **Mandatory reporting**
- _____ **Client confidentiality**
- _____ **Professional boundaries with clients**
- _____ **Resignation**
- _____ **Supervision (Community Engagement Manager & Program Management)**

Name: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

First volunteer placement location & description:
