



The O'Connor House Volunteer Handbook

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ABOUT THE O'CONNOR HOUSE

The O'Connor House mission states *"Through God's care and mercy, we provide a home and loving support to transform the lives of single, homeless pregnant women and their children."*

The O'Connor House helps young homeless pregnant women with their physical and emotional needs. In addition to shelter, we assist with resources and services that empower the women on their personal journeys toward independence. We provide guidance and support through counseling, life skills classes, and mentor relationships. While at The O'Connor House, we encourage the developing or strengthening of a deeper spiritual life by creating an environment of Christian love and support and offering opportunities for prayer and Bible study.

The O'Connor House is named after John Cardinal O'Connor who established homes for serving women in crisis pregnancies. The O'Connor House opened in July 2005 and is located in Carmel, Indiana (Hamilton County). It fills an unmet need in the Greater Indianapolis Metropolitan Area, however, accepts young pregnant women in need regardless of their originating location.

Volunteers are a critical part of The O'Connor House mission. They assist in a variety of volunteer roles. They support the women, babies and children by mentoring, modeling positive actions, and helping in many ways.

There are opportunities to volunteer as an individual or group. Volunteering can fit into your schedule either as a one-time or recurring service experience. Volunteer opportunities include providing transportation for the women, childcare, administration assistance, sorting donated items, teaching life-skill classes, planning fundraising events, and service projects at the house. We also love to learn about your unique gifts and skills.

The goal of The O'Connor House is not that this would become a permanent home for residents but that it would be a place for residents to stay temporarily while they are making positive life changes. As residents make life changes and become self-sufficient, they will transition to their own apartments. It is wonderful to see women accomplishing their goals of self-sufficiency but when they move on it can be difficult for the staff and volunteers who have formed attachments. As you are getting to know and love the residents and their children, keep in mind that they will eventually be moving out of The O'Connor House.

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITES OVERVIEW

There are a variety of volunteer opportunities at The O'Connor House. This list provides an overview of the most common volunteer roles. Please let us know if you have a special interest or passion that is not listed; we would love to talk with you about new ideas.

TRANSPORTATION

The O'Connor House residents need transportation to appointments, work, or school. This involves picking up the resident from The O'Connor House and taking them to the needed location (typically within 5 miles) or picking them up from the location and dropping them off at the house. Transportation may include taking the children to daycare or with the mom to the doctor or school. If transporting with the children, the mother will be in the car at all times with her child and will be responsible for having a car seat and ensuring the car seat and her child are correctly buckled. Most transportation is one way but you may have the option to wait during a short appointment and drive both directions.

Volunteers providing transportation must be over 21 years old and have a valid driver's license and automobile insurance. The O'Connor House must have a copy of both the volunteer's driver license and auto insurance on file before a volunteer can provide transportation.

Providing transportation is a wonderful way to connect with the young mothers one-on-one and often becomes an informal mentoring opportunity.

HOUSE COVERAGE

This involves coming to The O'Connor House for a 1 to 3-hour period during a busy time of the day. We also have house coverage opportunities when staff is off site for meetings or training. A volunteer must be over 21 and female in order to provide house coverage.

The most important role while a volunteer is providing house coverage is to be available to the residents and interact with them and their children. It is important that the residents know that people care about them. This is a chance to engage with the moms and children by talking, playing games, baking cookies, etc.

BABYSITTING

There are many opportunities for babysitting. We routinely provide babysitting for the mothers while they are in counseling (individual and group), Bible Study, Life Skill Classes and Mentor Program events or activities. These babysitting opportunities appear on the SignUp Genius email each week. There may also be babysitting opportunities as needs arise for each mom. Examples include while a mom receives tutoring or when recovering from childbirth. Staff will guide you upon arrival and provide background information. Please be familiar with the volunteer guidelines.

*All babysitting volunteers need to 14 or older, unless accompanied by an adult.

SORTING DONATIONS

We receive in-kind donations often and need help sorting and organizing donations. This volunteer role works with the house manager who coordinates in-kind donation.

FUNDRAISING EVENTS

Each year The O'Connor House development team hosts a large annual fundraiser and a smaller intimate appreciation event. These events are important in support of the operating budget. Volunteers who enjoy planning, organizing, and working on committees would be ideal to serve in this area.

HELP WITH MENTOR PROGRAM EVENTS

Assist our Mentor Program Manager in helping with setting up, serving, and clean up of our Mentor Program events.

LIFE SKILL CLASSES

The O'Connor House offers a weekly life skill class. Some of the topics addressed during these classes include budgeting, parenting issues, child developmental milestones, car maintenance, CPR, safe sleep, nutrition, interviewing skills, etc.

Life skills classes are held Tuesday evenings from 7:00- 8:00 PM. If you have expertise in an applicable area and have interest in leading a class, please let us know. House Director, Susan Barrett, coordinates the classes.

FORMAL MENTOR

A mentor can offer encouragement and empower the women to take on the challenges they are facing when they come to The O'Connor House. A mentor can also help the young women work toward goals for a brighter future.

The Mentor Program is designed to empower each young woman to progress toward self-sufficiency. The mentoring program offers the women strong role models who encourage them to set and achieve personal and professional goals, and complete instruction modules in parent, self-esteem, character building and life skills.

If you feel called to a *very engaged* volunteer opportunity with a yearlong commitment and are interested in learning more about becoming a formal mentor, please contact Katherine Shepard at kshepard@theoconnorhouse.org.

*Please note that to be eligible to become a mentor, you must volunteer in another capacity at TOCH for a three-month period.

PROJECTS

INDIVIDUAL AND GROUP PROJECTS

Volunteers participating in group projects come to The O'Connor House and work on various things that need to be done on a one-time basis. Examples of group projects include general cleaning, organizing, outside work, or helping with special events.

SORTING IN-KIND DONATIONS

- We receive baby items, clothing, and other in-kind donations daily. Groups can help sort, organize, and store donations.
- Restock diapers and wipers

SANITIZE TOYS

- Sanitizing wipes are under the sink.
- All non-cloth children's toys located in the playroom downstairs should be wiped down or washed in bleach/water combination and then rinsed.

CLEANING

- Cleaning supplies are located in the closet by the back door to the garage.
- Basic cleaning is the responsibility of the residents, however, in depth cleaning including treating spots, steam cleaning carpets, vacuuming vents, etc. can be done.
- Baseboards and blinds can be dusted using swifter dusters.
- All-purpose cleaner can be used on additional dirt spots on walls, tables, etc.

OUTDOOR MAINTENANCE

As long as the weather is good, the following outdoor projects can be done:

- Weeding around the patio area and all flowerbeds.
- Trimming bushes and trees
- Cleaning out garage, wiping down patio furniture, and sweeping front porch.

Winter Outdoor work includes:

- Salting icy areas on the driveway and sidewalks
- Shovel sidewalks and porch

COOKING MEALS

- Volunteers are welcome to join residents for meals. This is a great way to spend time with residents and their children. Groups may come in and bring a meal or prepare a meal onsite.

OFF SITE DRIVES/FUNDRAISERS

(Below are examples of Group Projects. Our staff can help you plan one of these!)

- Baby Bottle Fundraiser / Loose Change Collection**
Collect empty baby bottles and clean them. Create & attach a flyer or brochure to each bottle to introduce The O'Connor House to others and invite them to participate in your Baby Bottle Fundraiser to benefit TOCH and the women and children.

- Party with a Purpose**
Raise awareness and support TOCH by hosting a dinner or simple coffee & muffins breakfast at your church or an event, give brochures, and accept donations. And/or sell Baked Goods that your group makes. Have fun with family and friends while doing this!

- Diaper & Wipes Drive (or House Cleaning Products Drive or Paper Products Drive)**
Send an email to invite others to join in your efforts to help the moms and babies at The O'Connor House. Ask them to purchase diapers & wipes. Ask them to deliver to your house or tell them you will pick up the items.

- Car Wash**
Organize a car wash at your church or school parking lot on a specific day for a few hours. Collect donations in exchange for a car wash. Come to The O'Connor House for a tour before or after your car wash. Deliver the check or cash to TOCH. Send a thank you email or note card to those who helped you.

- Lemonade Stand**
Sell lemonade, water bottles, soft drinks at your soccer games or just in your front yard! Pass out The O'Connor House brochures to your neighbors beforehand to let them know the Saturday you will have your fundraiser.

To discuss any of the above group projects, or another project idea not listed, please contact Joan Eicher at jeicher@theoconnorhouse.org.

GETTING STARTED as a Volunteer at The O'Connor House

The following items should be completed and turned in to Joan Eicher, Volunteer Coordinator, prior to volunteering.

1. Completed Application
2. Completed Background Check
 - Background checks are automatically included in Safe and Sacred Training.
 - If you have received a background check within the past three years from another organization, please provide documentation to Joan Eicher either through an email at jeicher@theoconnorhouse.org or drop off a copy to The O'Connor House in an envelope with Joan's name on the outside.
 - If you have not had a background check, please take a few minutes to access the following link and complete the background check.
 - <https://www.ministryopportunities.org/TheOConnorHouse>
3. Copy of a Valid Driver's License and a Copy of Auto Insurance Card for volunteers that provide transportation.*
4. Safety Protocol Training for those volunteers that will be providing childcare, transportation, house coverage and mentoring.**

*****We have made arrangements for a variety of options for your convenience. Please choose ONE of the following three options. Each of the following options are either free or pre-paid.***

OPTION #1 *Already Safety Protocol Trained through Safe and Sacred.*

If you have completed Safe and Sacred or a child safety protocol training (within the last three years), please send information to Joan Eicher at jeicher@theoconnorhouse.org

*You can retrieve your certificate of completion from your parish or online after you log into your account.

OPTION #2 *ONLINE TRAINING:*

- Safe and Sacred through Your Local Parish – <https://safeandsacred-dol-in.org>
This is the preferred option, if available to you through your church. This option also includes a background check.
- Darkness to Light Stewards of Children Online Training – You must use the link below to access the training. *Please select The Stewards of Children Option.* <https://d2l.csod.com/selfreg/register.aspx?c=theoconnorhouse>

OPTION #3 IN- PERSON TRAINING:

Chaucie's Place – 4607 E. 106th St. Carmel, IN 46033 www.indianaprevention.org

Darkness to Light Stewards of Children Prevention Training

Times are specified on the website. You can register by calling Chaucie's place or registering Online.

****Please reference Eventbrite Code: oconnorhouse***

Once you have the necessary items completed, you will begin to receive a weekly email. This email contains the SignUp Genius listing of all the weekly volunteer opportunities.

The SignUp Genius give you the opportunity to volunteer as your schedule permits. You can sign up for as many or as few opportunities as you like.

WHEN YOU COME TO THE O'CONNOR HOUSE

- Come to the front door.
- Sign the volunteer log in the foyer.
- Let the House Director or House Manager know that you have arrived.
- If you are providing transportation, you don't need to get out of your vehicle. Pull in the driveway and the resident will meet you at your vehicle.

We sincerely hope this doesn't happen, however, if the resident doesn't come out within 5 minutes of the designated pick-up time, please call the house and let the House Manager on duty know that you are here. If there are any changes to the transportation schedule after you have signed up, a House Manager will call or text to let you know.

Also, please note that if there are any changes to the transportation schedule after you have signed up, a House Manager will call or text to let you know.

GENERAL VOLUNTEER GUIDELINES

VOLUNTEER/VISITOR LOG

All volunteers and visitors at The O'Connor House should first sign Visitor's Log in the foyer.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Personal resident information or activities should be kept confidential. Residents must know that they can trust volunteers to not share their information with others. If a volunteer is concerned about something that a resident says, she should talk with a staff member rather than another volunteer or someone outside of The O'Connor House.

PRIVACY

All visitors and volunteers should respect a resident's right to privacy. Personal questions about the father of the baby, how the resident's family feels about the pregnancy, and the resident's past experiences with pregnancy, adoption, or abortion should be avoided. A resident may volunteer information as they feel comfortable.

PHOTOS

To protect the privacy of those we serve, volunteers are not allowed to take photos of the mothers, toddlers, or babies.

SOCIAL MEDIA

The O'Connor House Social Media Liaison posts social media content on a variety of platforms which we welcome you to like and share. Please do not post pictures or content directly.

COMPASSION

Whether or not a volunteer agrees with decisions and actions a resident is making, she should always be a compassionate listener. When a resident has come to trust that a volunteer will act with compassion, she will often be receptive to dialogue.

PHYSICAL CONTACT

Volunteers should ask before initiating physical contact with a resident or her children. If the child's mother is present, she should be asked before a volunteer picks up or hugs a child, she is unfamiliar with. Often, the moms love volunteers to show interest in the child(ren) and appreciate the opportunity for a help. Asking, "Would you like me to help you by holding (or playing with) your child?" is a great way to show love and respect.

MOTHER'S AUTHORITY

Volunteers should respect a mother's authority over her children. Advice may be given but ultimately, a mother is responsible for her children. Modeling behavior by the way you talk or interact with the mother or child is a wonderful way to share a message.

COMMUNITY AREAS

All volunteers and visitors should remain in the community areas of the house unless a staff member gives permission to go upstairs for a special reason. Men are not allowed in the home unless a staff member is with them at all times. Men are never allowed to go upstairs.

DISCUSSIONS/SENSITIVE ISSUES

Certain discussions should be avoided if possible. Discussions about adoption, abortion, or other sensitive topics should be handled very carefully and with a lot of compassion. These are topics often best addressed by staff and whenever possible should be directed to staff.

SMOKING

The O'Connor House is a smoke free environment.

ALCOHOL

Volunteers are not allowed to bring alcoholic beverages to The O'Connor House.

UNDERAGE VOLUNTEERS

We welcome volunteers of all ages and strive to maintain a family atmosphere. Our expectation is that while each resident is living here, they will conduct themselves in an appropriate fashion. However, we cannot always filter information or actions they share with staff and volunteers. It is important to note that some women may share personal information about themselves that is difficult to hear. Therefore, all volunteers under the age of 18 need to have a legal guardian witness and sign the volunteer form. Due to liability, if staff needs to leave during the time when an underage volunteer is at the house, the volunteer will be asked to accompany the house staff off property until staff can return. This most often occurs if the staff needs to make a transportation run.

VOLUNTEER REFERRALS

New volunteers are welcome and appreciated at The O'Connor House. If you know someone who would be interested in volunteering, feel free to have them contact the office at (317) 844-9562 or visit at our website at www.theoconnorhouse.org

QUESTIONS/CONCERNS

All questions or concerns should be directed to a staff member. If you have concern about any behavior or action from a resident or resident's child, please bring it to the attention of the house manager on duty.

CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT

Our hope is that our home is always a safe place. However, if you suspect that a child residing at the house may be a victim of child abuse or neglect, please contact the House Manager on duty immediately to ensure that the proper report is filed with authorities. Following is the Mandate to Report Law for Indiana.

Mandate to Report Under Indiana State Law:

Child abuse under the law includes the following, among other situations:

- Failure by a parent, guardian, or custodian to provide a child necessary food, shelter or medical care so as to cause the physical or mental condition to be seriously impaired;
- Physical injury by a parent, guardian, or custodian, endangering the child's physical or mental health;
- Where the child is a victim of a sex offense committed by any person (i.e., sexual abuse); and/or,
- Allowing a child to endanger its own health or the health of another.

The reporting law applies to all persons without exception. Safety protocol training will help provide additional information on this topic.

CONTACT INFORMATION

If a volunteer is scheduled to be at The O'Connor House and cannot make it, she should call The O'Connor House office and let the staff know. Please leave a message, if needed.

In case of an emergency, 911 should be called first. After 911 has been called, please call House Director, Susan Barrett, at 317-614-5030.

In case of a non-emergency question or concern, a staff member should be contacted. Staff member phone numbers are listed in the office.

House Contact Information:
45 Village Dr. North
Carmel, IN 46032

Public Address:
P.O. Box 1061
Carmel, IN 46032

Website:
www.theoconnorhouse.org

Phone:
317-844-9562

For any questions, please feel free to contact Joan Eicher at jeicher@theoconnorhouse.org.

THANK YOU

*“EACH OF YOU SHOULD USE
WHATEVER
GIFTS YOU HAVE
RECEIVED TO SERVE OTHERS...”
1 PETER 4:10*