MEALS ON WHEELS
GREATER LEHIGH VALLEY

Volunteer Handbook

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Welcome

Thank you for choosing to volunteer with Meals on Wheels of the Greater Lehigh Valley. By sharing your time, you are helping neighbors remain healthy, independent, and connected to their community.

For many of the people we serve, your visit is more than a meal delivery. It is a friendly face, a reassuring check-in, and a reminder that someone cares. Every delivery makes a meaningful difference.

We are grateful you have chosen to be part of our mission.

Our Mission

Meals on Wheels provides healthy nutrition and fosters social connection across the Greater Lehigh Valley.

Our Program

Meals on Wheels of the Greater Lehigh Valley is a private, nonprofit organization serving Lehigh and Northampton Counties and portions of Carbon County in Pennsylvania.

We provide nutritious meals and social connection to older adults and individuals with disabilities or chronic illnesses. Our clients range in age from young adults to over 100 years old and have a wide range of needs.

Meals are delivered by volunteers who begin their routes from designated pickup locations across our service area. These sites serve as gathering points where volunteers begin their assigned delivery routes.

Each delivery represents an opportunity to support a client's independence by providing both nourishment and a brief, friendly wellness check. Whenever possible, volunteers are expected to make verbal or visual contact with the client unless alternate delivery instructions have been provided by MOWGLV.

Becoming a Volunteer

As a volunteer, you are essential to helping us carry out the services our clients rely on. You are the face of our agency and play a key role in upholding the reputation we have established over many years.

Your interactions with clients and others you encounter while volunteering reflect on MOWGLV. We ask that you are courteous and pleasant and treat clients and their families with kindness and respect.

Eligibility Requirements

In order to provide the highest level of service, volunteers must:

- Meet our age requirement of 18 or older to volunteer independently. Volunteers under age 18, or individuals who are unable to independently consent to or agree to volunteer requirements, must be accompanied by a parent, guardian, or other legally authorized representative who has completed the application process.
- Be physically able to manage coolers, bags, and boxes; navigate stairs; and handle delivery conditions.
- Verify a valid driver's license and auto insurance if driving on behalf of MOWGLV.

Getting Started

To begin volunteering, you must:

- Complete a volunteer application and liability/abuse waiver.
- Complete a background check through Sterling Volunteers.
- Attend orientation and/or watch the MOWGLV training video.
- Observe a delivery route (if volunteering to deliver meals).
- Review the Shift Instructions for your volunteer assignment.
- Review this handbook and acknowledge receipt.

This handbook outlines the policies and expectations that apply to all volunteers. Detailed delivery procedures are provided separately in the Shift Instructions for your volunteer assignment.

Code of Conduct

Volunteers are the lifeline of our organization and represent us in the community. This Code of Conduct outlines expectations for professional behavior, client interaction, confidentiality, and safety to support a respectful and safe experience for everyone involved.

We do not permit, condone, or tolerate illegal or unethical behavior that may undermine the integrity of our organization.

Professional Conduct

Volunteers are expected to conduct themselves in a professional manner, free of behaviors such as physical, sexual, emotional, or verbal abuse. Volunteers are expected to treat clients with consideration, respect, and dignity. Volunteers should respect clients' personal space and boundaries and avoid physical contact beyond appropriate greetings or interactions. Volunteers should not provide personal care, physical assistance, or any physical contact that could make a client or volunteer uncomfortable. Volunteers are to carry out assigned duties only; no extra or unsanctioned interaction with clients should occur without express authorization from our office.

Volunteers are also expected to use proper care when handling MOWGLV equipment and supplies and to notify the office if items are damaged or lost.

Confidentiality

Volunteers are expected to maintain strict confidentiality regarding all client information. This information should not be shared with anyone other than authorized MOWGLV staff, and any questions or concerns should be directed to our office. Staff may not be able to share specific client information with volunteers due to privacy requirements.

Volunteers may not share client names, personal information, photos, videos, stories, or details about a client's circumstances on social media or other online platforms. Volunteers may not communicate with clients through personal social media accounts, direct messaging, or other personal online platforms. Any questions about sharing information or photos related to volunteer activities should be directed to MOWGLV staff.

Conflict of Interest and Boundaries

Volunteers support clients through meal delivery and are not in a business or service-provider relationship with clients.

To maintain clear boundaries, volunteers may not:

- Accept gifts, tips, or monetary payments from clients
- Take advantage of clients for personal or financial gain
- Offer medical, legal, or financial advice
- Solicit clients or fellow volunteers on behalf of other organizations, businesses, or personal interests

If a situation feels unclear, volunteers should contact MOWGLV staff for guidance.

Respect for Clients

Volunteers serve clients in their homes and communities and are expected to treat every individual with dignity, courtesy, and respect.

This includes respecting clients' personal circumstances, living environments, and individual beliefs. Volunteers should not impose personal opinions or engage in discussions that may be intrusive, political, or religious in nature.

If a client raises topics of personal belief, volunteers are not required to engage. The focus of the visit should remain on meal delivery and a brief, respectful interaction.

If a situation feels unsafe, inappropriate, or concerning, volunteers should report it to MOWGLV staff.

Attendance and Absenteeism

Please notify the Volunteer Services Department of any scheduled absences as far in advance as possible. You can cancel upcoming assignments in MOWScheduler or by calling or emailing our office directly.

If you are unable to volunteer due to illness or an emergency, please notify us as soon as possible by calling 610-419-6117. If you are feeling unwell and will have direct contact with clients, please cancel your shift. When calling, identify yourself as a volunteer and let us know your pickup location.

If you are unable to fulfill your regular volunteer commitment on multiple occasions without advance notice, we may adjust your status from a regular volunteer to a substitute volunteer. Continued absenteeism may result in a review of your volunteer assignment.

Service at the Discretion of MOWGLV

We accept the service of all volunteers with the understanding that volunteer service is at the sole discretion of MOWGLV. Violations of policy or procedure will be addressed and may result in verbal or written warnings prior to the removal of a volunteer assignment. MOWGLV reserves the right to discontinue a volunteer relationship or modify volunteer assignments at any time.

Providing Information

While volunteering, people may approach you with questions about our organization or the services we provide. If you are unsure of an answer, refer them to a member of our staff. Business cards with contact information for our departments are included in each route folder and may be shared with anyone interested in learning more about Meals on Wheels.

Additional Support

Our expectation is that volunteers carry out their duties as assigned and maintain appropriate boundaries with clients. While clients may occasionally ask for help with other tasks, volunteers are not expected to provide assistance beyond meal delivery and approved volunteer activities. If you are unsure whether a request is appropriate, contact MOWGLV staff for guidance.

Volunteers should not provide medication, additional food, transportation, personal care, or physical assistance, including helping a client in or out of a chair or bed. Volunteers should not provide services or support that place them in a caregiver role or create a personal arrangement with a client. If a client needs assistance beyond your volunteer responsibilities, please notify our office so we can follow up appropriately.

Volunteers may occasionally be required to enter a client's home as part of an approved delivery plan or specific delivery instructions. Volunteers should only enter a client's home when authorized by MOWGLV and should not enter or remain in a home if they feel unsafe or uncomfortable. If a situation does not feel appropriate or safe, contact MOWGLV for guidance. If the client is insistent or if the request is for more substantial support such as cleaning, yard work or even transportation to an appointment, please report to our office so we can follow up with them.

Insurance and Liability

MOWGLV maintains liability insurance that may provide coverage for claims involving personal injury to a client or damage to a client's property arising from authorized volunteer activities. This insurance does not provide coverage for injuries sustained by volunteers or for damage to a volunteer's personal vehicle while volunteering.

Volunteers who use their personal vehicles are responsible for maintaining their own automobile insurance. Any parking or traffic citations incurred while volunteering are the responsibility of the volunteer.

Mileage Reimbursement

Volunteers use their own vehicles for deliveries and may submit mileage for routes driven. Mileage is calculated starting and ending from the pickup location and will be reimbursed by MOWGLV at a rate determined by the IRS (currently $.14 per mile). Please submit your mileage form **within 90 days** of the date the mileage was incurred.

Volunteers may choose either mileage reimbursement or a charitable mileage deduction on their income tax return, but not both for the same mileage. MOWGLV does not provide tax advice. Please consult a qualified tax professional regarding your individual tax situation.

Safety

Our goal is to provide a safe environment for volunteers. All clients are visited by a MOWGLV Case Manager prior to starting on our service. The Case Manager assesses both the client and their living situation to minimize or avoid any issues that could impact volunteers. If you should ever encounter a situation that feels unsafe, always err on the side of caution and do not continue. Your safety always comes first. If something doesn't feel right, do not continue the delivery. Return to your vehicle if necessary and contact our office for guidance.

Report any safety concerns or issues immediately to our office.

Dress Code

Volunteers represent MOWGLV while at pickup locations and while making deliveries. Please dress comfortably, appropriately, and for the weather and conditions you may encounter.

For safety, avoid wearing flip-flops or other open-toe or open-heel footwear, as you may encounter uneven sidewalks, stairs, or other walking hazards during deliveries.

Volunteers should wear their MOWGLV photo identification badge while volunteering. MOWGLV apparel may be worn, when available, to help clients and community members recognize you as a Meals on Wheels volunteer.

Inclement Weather

If MOWGLV cancels deliveries due to inclement weather, we will notify scheduled volunteers by sending an automated phone call from our main office number **610-691-1030**. You may also check our Facebook page or WFMZ.com for a list of cancellations and closings. Meals are canceled when conditions make it too hazardous for volunteers to safely deliver. If you are unsure whether deliveries have been canceled, please call the office before traveling. We provide shelf stable meals and emergency frozen meals to all clients so they have food on hand in event of cancellation.

Reporting Emergency Situations

As a Meals on Wheels volunteer, you play an important role in helping us identify clients who may need assistance. Volunteers are required to report any suspected abuse, neglect, exploitation, or inappropriate behavior involving a client, volunteer, staff member, or visitor to MOWGLV as soon as possible. Volunteers are not expected to investigate concerns or determine whether abuse has occurred. Their responsibility is to report concerns so MOWGLV can respond appropriately.

If you are concerned about a client's safety or well-being, contact our office as soon as possible.

If a client appears to be in imminent danger or requires immediate medical attention, call 9-1-1 first. After emergency services have been contacted, notify MOWGLV so we are aware of the situation.

Unless there is an immediate danger to the client or you are directed to do so by emergency responders, do not attempt to move the client or provide medical assistance beyond your level of training. Remain with the client, if it is safe to do so, until help arrives.

Client Conduct

To help ensure a safe and respectful experience for everyone, MOWGLV has established the following expectations for clients. Volunteers should be familiar with these expectations so they know when to report concerns. Reporting concerns is not about getting a client in trouble. It helps MOWGLV address issues early, provide appropriate support, and maintain a safe environment for both clients and volunteers.

Client Code of Conduct

Clients are expected to be considerate of others. Volunteers and staff members should always be treated with courtesy and respect.

- Use of abusive, obscene, threatening, harassing, insulting or suggestive language and/or actions will not be tolerated.
- Derogatory comments, racial slurs or phrases to describe someone or to insult will not be tolerated.
- Clients are expected to maintain an acceptable appearance while meals are delivered. This includes attire that is properly buttoned, zipped, tied or appropriately closed. Clients should not appear in undergarments, underwear or unclothed.
- Clients are responsible for ensuring animals are secured during meal delivery. Animals must be secured in another room or yard prior to the client answering the door to retrieve meals.

If you observe behavior or conditions that do not meet these expectations, report the situation to MOWGLV as soon as possible. If you ever feel unsafe, do not complete the delivery and contact our office immediately.

MOWGLV staff members will take appropriate steps to rectify any of the above situations. This includes:

- Initial discussion with the client, caretaker and/or emergency contact.
- Reviewing guidelines with the client, caretaker and/or emergency contact.
- Mutual agreement on alternative delivery site/person (apartment manager, neighbor, etc.)

MOWGLV has the right to temporarily or permanently stop services if violations occur.

Client Pet Policy

MOWGLV requires clients with pets to ensure they are restrained or confined during meal delivery. If an unsecured animal presents a safety concern, do not attempt the delivery. Return to your vehicle and contact our office immediately. Volunteers should refrain from approaching or giving treats to clients' pets.

Important Reminders

Identification

- Wear your MOWGLV name badge.
- Display your Meals on Wheels sign and/or magnet.

Food Safety

- Keep all food in insulated carriers until delivery. This is necessary to prevent food spoilage. Hot food begins to spoil if temperature is below 140°, milk can spoil when temperature exceeds 45°.
- Keep insulated carriers closed except when removing a meal for delivery. Close carriers before proceeding to the next stop to help maintain safe food temperatures.
- Handle food trays carefully.
- Deliver meals directly to the client or another person at the residence. Do not leave meals unattended or in a cooler or other location unless specifically authorized by MOWGLV.

Client Interaction

- Follow all client-specific delivery instructions exactly as provided. Occasionally, volunteers may be instructed not to engage in conversation with a client or to leave immediately after delivering a meal. These instructions are based on confidential information about the client that cannot be shared with volunteers. While the reason for an instruction may not be apparent, these directions are intended to protect the well-being and safety of both the client and the volunteer and should be followed as provided.
- Make verbal or visual contact with the client unless instructed otherwise.
- Do not provide additional food, medication, transportation, or physical assistance to clients.
- Be friendly and professional. While deliveries should remain efficient, a brief conversation may be one of the most meaningful parts of a client's day.

Reporting Concerns

- In an emergency, call 9-1-1 first, then notify MOWGLV.
- Report any safety concerns, accidents, or unusual situations to the MOWGLV office as soon as safely possible.

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