



*For Alexandrians who prefer to remain  
Independently in their own homes.*

# **VOLUNTEER HANDBOOK**

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*AHA is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization created  
and staffed by your Alexandria neighbors*

## Table of Contents

|  |    |
|--|----|
| MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR .....            | 3  |
| HISTORY OF AT HOME IN ALEXANDRIA (AHA) .....         | 4  |
| MISSION OF AHA .....                                 | 5  |
| GOALS OF AHA .....                                   | 5  |
| GOALS OF THE VOLUNTEER PROGRAM.....                  | 5  |
| VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES WITH AHA.....                | 6  |
| Transportation (by certified drivers).....           | 6  |
| Home Maintenance .....                               | 6  |
| Technology Assistance .....                          | 6  |
| Organization/Decluttering.....                       | 7  |
| Personal Connections.....                            | 7  |
| Errands .....  | 7  |
| In-Home Convenience .....                            | 7  |
| Outdoor Services.....                                | 8  |
| Referrals to Vetted Service Providers.....           | 8  |
| Administrative Support.....                          | 8  |
| VOLUNTEER PROGRAM POLICIES .....                     | 9  |
| Volunteer-First Policy.....                          | 9  |
| General Expectations .....                           | 9  |
| Volunteer Response to Increased Needs of Member..... | 9  |
| Volunteer Calls to 911 .....                         | 10 |
| Caveats .....  | 10 |
| Privacy and Confidentiality .....                    | 10 |
| Representation of the Organization .....             | 10 |
| Assignments.....                                     | 10 |
| Special-Case Volunteers .....                        | 11 |
| Recordkeeping .....                                  | 11 |
| Volunteer Recognition .....                          | 11 |
| Extended Absences and Resignation .....              | 11 |
| Termination.....                                     | 11 |
| Volunteer Driver Insurance.....                      | 11 |
| ABOUT THIS HANDBOOK.....                             | 12 |

## MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

*At Home in Alexandria (AHA) gives residents of Alexandria both the practical means and the confidence to live their lives to the fullest in their own homes for as long as possible as they grow older. We are determined to provide as many non-medical services as possible through a cadre of skilled and well-trained volunteers. We know that using volunteers will help minimize the cost of providing services, but we also know that volunteer service itself will prove to be a satisfying experience.*

*Fortunately, we have been able to find many Alexandria residents who are enthusiastic about our mission, eager to help their neighbors, and willing to sign on as volunteers.*

*With the first wave of baby-boomers now turning sixty-five+, retirement is much in the news, and the concept of aging in place has received a good deal of attention. A recent AARP poll revealed that most seniors today would rather stay in their own homes than move to retirement homes or communities.*

*This is why the volunteer program is so central to the mission of AHA. Many of us remember the list of tasks that Mom and Dad had waiting when we went home for a visit: moving furniture, helping out with yard work, setting up the new computer, programming the DVD player and perhaps connecting it with a new TV, washing windows, cleaning out the garage, shopping for a new appliance, or providing a ride to the doctor's office for an appointment. Any task you might have performed (or still perform) as a helpful son or daughter, you might perform as a good neighbor for a Member of AHA*

*The Volunteer Liaison, office staff and I will work with you to find and ensure matches between your interests and abilities and the needs of AHA. Many AHA Members are also volunteers. All volunteers performing their assigned tasks and services are covered by the AHA liability insurance policy.*

*We are deeply grateful to you for the time and talent that you provide to help our AHA Members get where they need to go, participate in social activities, make new friends, gain access to professional advice on a range of important matters, and feel safe and confident in their own homes as they grow older.*

*Cele Garrett,  
Executive Director*

## **HISTORY OF AT HOME IN ALEXANDRIA (AHA)**

AHA was formed in late 2008 by several Alexandrians who saw the need to give Alexandria residents an option to remain in their homes in their later years, or when faced with temporary or long-term health problems or disability. AHA was organized in January 2009 as a fee-based, 501 (c)(3) corporation governed by an unpaid Board of Directors and is also recognized as a Virginia charitable fund raising organization.

The concept of the AHA “village” grew from concerns many people share as they age: the fear of becoming a burden to their family and friends, the difficulty in continuing to do routine but vital household tasks, as well as questions about coping with short-term or more serious health care needs at home.

AHA Board members conducted structured personal interviews with leaders of public and private stakeholder organizations and individuals in Alexandria, during the Spring/Summer of 2009, to determine what non-medical services are already available and what non-medical services are needed. These stakeholders were unanimous in expressing a need for AHA in our city.

The services that topped the list were:

- Transportation
- Centralized information, referral, and warm hand-offs to needed vetted services
- Assistance with advocacy around medical/health related issues
- Household safety, maintenance, repairs and improvements
- In-home personal non-medical services by trained volunteers or other vetted providers
- Help with paperwork and routine personal financial organization
- Leisure, cultural and social activities

AHA’s non-medical services will be tailored to Members’ specific needs, somewhat like a concierge service. Some needs may be filled directly by trained AHA volunteers; others will be provided by vetted public and private providers. All services will be monitored and evaluated to ensure quality results have been achieved. AHA works with and supports existing community services and businesses and avoids duplicating those that are well-established.

Groups providing this type of service have been established across the US today, the most famous being Beacon Hill Village in Boston (<http://www.beaconhillvillage.org/>) with over 300 participating households. In the metropolitan Washington, DC area there are currently more than 30 villages in operation as of January, 2016.

AHA’s launch created a resource that is not only an alternative to elder care and rehabilitation facilities, but also helps people live a higher quality and more stress-free life while they are healthy by identifying vetted services and sponsoring social and educational events in the community.

## **MISSION OF AHA**

*AHA is a non-profit, resident-formed neighborhood organization that connects residents to non-medical services that enable them to remain in their homes independently as they age and face new challenges.*

## **GOALS OF AHA**

*Support Alexandrians who prefer to remain – independently- in their own homes by:*

- *Delivering reliable cost effective transportation and home maintenance services provided by trained volunteers;*
- *Providing ready access to vetted service providers;*
- *Working cooperatively with and supporting existing community services and businesses to avoid duplicating those that are well-established; and*
- *Offering an array of social and educational programs.*

## **GOALS OF THE VOLUNTEER PROGRAM**

- *To support the mission of AHA by providing effective and quality non-medical services;*
- *To employ a “volunteer-first” policy by finding a qualified volunteer to fulfill a request before contacting a commercial vendor;*
- *To ensure volunteers have a pleasant and rewarding service experience;*
- *To nurture and build community by developing ties to the individual members served and to other AHA members and volunteers;*
- *To provide opportunities for new friendships to develop among volunteers and members as they participate in social programs, share experiences, and discover mutual interests; and*
- *To provide the support, expertise, and non-medical services needed to give Alexandria residents the practical means and confidence to live safely and comfortably in their own homes.*

## **VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES WITH AHA**

*Bring your interests to AHA:*

*The best volunteers are those who enjoy sharing their knowledge, skills, and abilities.*

### What we offer to Members

#### **Transportation (by certified drivers)**

- Round trip to and from medical and dental appointments, grocery stores, pharmacies, cleaners, meetings, restaurants, social and educational events, etc.

Volunteers pick up Members to drive them to their destination and then return them to their homes; sometimes the trip will only be ONE WAY. Upon request, drivers will also assist Members to and from their front door or door(s) of the destination, and will help carry groceries or packages into the Member's house. In no circumstance is a volunteer to lift a Member into/out of a vehicle. Drivers are not required to have handicap accessible vehicles.

*Rides are available to destinations up to 15 miles from the Member's residence.* After the Member calls or emails the office to request transportation, the office staff will solicit a volunteer driver. At least a day prior to the assignment, the assigned volunteer will call the Member to confirm arrangements. Members are responsible for the payment of any parking fees, tolls or other related transportation costs.

#### **Home Maintenance**

- Changing light bulbs
- Changing smoke alarm battery
- Simple handyman repairs
- Picture hanging
- Removing or placing items in the attic or storage
- Moving small items of furniture

Home maintenance services are provided for occasional needs and are not intended to replace normal home-based services such as routine cleaning and laundry, or home modification.

#### **Technology Assistance**

- Setup, technical, and end user support for computers, cell phones, DVDs, TVs, cable, satellite and internet services
- Assistance with online travel bookings, other reservations, and online shopping
- Setup and end user assistance for programmable thermostats, light timers, and small appliances

Volunteers will assist Members to help deal with today's technology questions and issues such as troubleshooting telephones, televisions, DVDs, computers, the internet and email, and cell

phones. Volunteers will also assist Members understand how their computer works, how to use common software, and organize computer and email files.

## **Organization/Decluttering**

- Manage checkbook
- Sorting mail
- Help with organizing office files and/or kitchen cabinets
- Closet organization
- Assist with downsizing and clutter reduction

There are times when a Member may require help organizing their home or mail. Volunteers can help with such organizational activities. If a volunteer observes any risk issues of hoarding (blocked egress, fire or fall hazards, animal or human waste, trash and spoiled food, and access risk for firefighters or other emergency personnel), the Volunteer is to immediately notify the Executive Director and/or office staff.

## **Personal Connections**

- Check-in calls, and follow up if there's no answer
- Friendly visit
- Reader
- Help with hobbies, playing games

Social isolation is a common problem faced by people who live by themselves. At a Member's request, volunteers can make a daily phone call to check on their well-being, or visit a Member to read to them, play cards or board games, or simply to chat over a cup of coffee.

## **Errands**

- Grocery shopping
- Prescription/dry cleaning /laundry pick up and drop off
- Miscellaneous errands

There are times when a Member can no longer perform a particular task because of medical or physical limitations. Volunteers will complete these tasks instead of the Member.

## **In-Home Convenience**

- Water plants
- Pet care
- Mail pick up
- Waiting for deliveries or other service personnel

A Member who is usually capable of performing a particular task at home may be unable to do so because of temporary medical or physical limitations, out-of-town travel, or other circumstances.

## **Outdoor Services**

- Gardening help and/or advice
- Snow and leaf removal
- Pulling weeds/yard cleanup
- Help with light pruning and planting, repotting plants
- Mulching
- Taking garbage out to street

A Member may no longer be able to complete the tasks required to maintain the outside of their home. Outdoor services are provided for occasional needs and are not intended to replace normal outdoor-based services such as routine grass cutting, lawn aeration and fertilization, and tree trimming.

## **Referrals to Vetted Service Providers**

- Clearinghouse for recommended public and non-profit or religious service providers
- Recommended commercial service providers of all kinds
- Warm Handoff if desired: a three way phone conversation between the service provider, the Member, and AHA
- Follow up that work was done well and at agreed upon price and quality
- Discount for members from some providers
- Directory of recommended providers
- Whatever the question, we'll try to get the answer

If a volunteer has tried to fill a Member request and determines the scope of the request is beyond their comfort or skill capability, the volunteer will contact the AHA office to request a commercial service provider. An example of this might be if the Member has requested someone to unclog a toilet, and the volunteer is unable to do so. In that case, the volunteer will inform the Member, and contact the office for additional guidance and assistance.

## **Administrative Support**

Many of us have worked in a business office at some point in our careers, performed organizational and administrative tasks, and acquired skills that are essential to the functioning of an efficient organization. If that has been your experience, we need your help. Office volunteers will be trained for their particular assignments, which may include:

- answering phones
- mailings
- filing
- entering data into a data base
- creating information packages
- staffing our kiosk/ display table at community events

# **VOLUNTEER PROGRAM POLICIES**

## **Volunteer-First Policy**

In providing services to its Members, AHA employs a volunteer-first policy, and expects that about 80 percent of the services we deliver on a monthly basis will be provided by volunteers. The AHA office staff will make a judgment as to whether a requested service can be handled by a volunteer or whether it requires the expertise of a preferred provider.

## **General Expectations**

Volunteers should adhere to the rules and policies of the volunteer handbook. Volunteers are also expected to:

- decline any gifts or tips that may be offered
- dress appropriately for the assignment
- attend orientation and training sessions
- consult with the office staff before assuming new responsibilities
- be prompt and reliable in reporting for duty
- notify the office staff as soon as possible when unable to report for a scheduled assignment
- maintain records and report time and mileage
- protect confidential information
- exercise good judgment
- treat Members and other volunteers with respect

## **Volunteer Response to Increased Needs of Member**

When a volunteer observes the below indicators of a Member's increasing need for support and/or health interventions, they should relay this information promptly to the Executive Director or the office staff (in the absence of the Executive Director). Information on the changed health status of the Member will be placed in writing in the AHA's Member folder, together with all updates on that status.

- Pre/post-operative status
- Changes in physical status (decreasing vision, hearing, balance, etc.)
- Changes in activities of daily living (bathing; dressing; grooming; oral care; toileting; getting out of a chair, bed, or car; walking, climbing stairs; eating; cooking; managing medications – finding medications that have not been taken; using the telephone; managing finances; doing laundry; etc.)
- Changes in cognitive status (increasing forgetfulness, difficulty communicating or finding words; difficulty with complex tasks; difficulty with planning or organizing; persistent sad or anxious feelings or feelings of hopelessness; increases irritability or restlessness)
- Inability of the caregiver to meet the needs of AHA Member
- Danger to self or others

- Hoarding
- Problems with driving
- Financial concerns
- Frequent hospitalization
- Weight loss
- Lack of social support
- Frequent falls
- Increased problems with mobility

## **Volunteer Calls to 911**

Volunteers must call 911 if a Member appears to be having health problems that need urgent attention. The volunteer will not leave the Member alone until emergency response personnel arrive.

## **Caveats**

Volunteers may often come into close personal contact with AHA Members as they provide volunteer services. ***Volunteers should avoid performing personal services that require close physical contact and should also be careful not to offer advice about a Member's health or safety that is outside the volunteer's area of expertise.***

## **Privacy and Confidentiality**

Volunteers are responsible for maintaining the confidentiality of all proprietary or privileged information to which they are exposed while serving as a volunteer, whether this information involves an AHA Member or another volunteer. Such information should not be shared outside the organization during informal conversations with friends. Volunteers are required to sign AHA's Privacy and Confidentiality Agreement.

When appropriate, AHA collects personal information directly from the person concerned or with the knowledge and consent of that person. AHA does not sell, rent, exchange, or share personal information for use by third parties in marketing or solicitations of any kind. A full statement of the AHA privacy policy will be available on the *At Home in Alexandria* website.

## **Representation of the Organization**

Volunteers should not act on behalf of or make statements representing the official position of the organization, unless they have been authorized to do so by the Executive Director or an officer of the Board of Directors. For example, volunteers should not make statements to the press or broadcast media without prior authorization. No volunteer is authorized to sign any agreement involving contractual or financial obligations.

## **Assignments**

Volunteers will be asked to take on assignments that coincide with their particular interests and abilities, as well as the needs of the organization and its members. Volunteers are free to discuss a change in assignment at any time they feel a change is necessary or desirable.

## **Special-Case Volunteers**

For special projects and activities, as deemed appropriate by the Executive Director, AHA may accept volunteers participating in student community-service activities, Boy Scout projects, Girl Scout projects, student intern projects, church-related groups, and corporate volunteer programs. In these cases, an agreement must be in place with the organization, school, or program that identifies responsibility for the care and management of the volunteers.

## **Recordkeeping**

Volunteers should keep a record of and report this information to the AHA office each time they perform an assignment for AHA. Accurate and up-to-date records are important to both AHA and the volunteer since they may be used as proof of tax deductions for gas and mileage to and from an assignment. In addition, volunteer time is used when applying for foundation or other grant monies.

## **Volunteer Recognition**

Expressions of volunteer recognition will be conducted annually to highlight and reward the contributions of volunteers to the organization's programs. An ad hoc committee of Board Members may make recommendations for volunteer recognition to the full Board of Directors. Members of the Board who are also volunteers are not eligible to receive recognition for their volunteer service.

## **Extended Absences and Resignation**

Volunteer assignments are not permanent. A volunteer may decide to stop volunteering at any time. Volunteers are asked to inform the AHA office staff and to give as much notice as possible if interrupting the volunteer assignment for either a brief or an extended period of time. To help the organization grow and learn from its experiences, volunteers may be asked to complete an evaluation before leaving the volunteer program.

## **Termination**

AHA may dismiss a volunteer if he or she fails to fulfill the duties of the position and/or meet the basic standards of professionalism set by the organization and judged essential to its performance. Grounds for dismissal may include, but are not limited to, the following: misconduct or insubordination, being under the influence of alcohol or drugs while on duty, theft of property or misuse of the organization's equipment or materials, verbal or physical abuse of Members, and breach of our privacy or confidentiality policies or other AHA policies and procedures.

## **Volunteer Driver Insurance**

Volunteer drivers use their own insurance coverage when driving their own automobiles. In addition, AHA has an umbrella liability insurance policy in place to provide additional coverage in the event of an accident. A copy of the volunteer's proof of **auto insurance must be on file in the AHA office.**

***Volunteer service at AHA should not become a burden. Volunteers should feel free to accept or decline particular assignments, depending upon their personal schedules and commitments. Volunteers may serve on a regular or periodic basis.***

## **ABOUT THIS HANDBOOK**

The policies and procedures in this volunteer handbook are subject to change.

We gratefully acknowledge the kind support of Barbara Sullivan, Executive Director of Mount Vernon At Home (MVAH) and Gail Kohn, former Executive Director of Capitol Hill Village (CHV) in Washington, DC in helping us develop this handbook, and in granting us permission to incorporate much material from the Volunteer handbooks prepared by Capitol Hill Village and Mount Vernon At Home.

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