



Providing practical, social and emotional support to Alexandrians who prefer to remain independently in their own homes.

AHA VOLUNTEER HANDBOOK

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AHA is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization created
by your Alexandria neighbors with volunteers from
throughout our community.

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MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Thank you for being an AHA volunteer! 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 provide non-medical services through a core of skilled and well-trained volunteers. Since we opened our doors in 2011, we have found that many Alexandria residents 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.

AHA's volunteer coordinator, our 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 offering your time and talent 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. We believe you'll find this to be a rewarding and satisfying experience.

Cele Garrett
AHA Executive Director

HISTORY OF AT HOME IN ALEXANDRIA (AHA)

In late 2008, several Alexandrians recognized 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. This group soon began a two-year process of exploring the emerging “village” movement.

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 interviews with leaders of public and private stakeholder organizations and individuals in Alexandria to determine which non-medical services were already available and identify those that were 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

The result was 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.

AHA’s non-medical services are tailored to members’ specific needs, somewhat like a concierge service. Some needs may be filled directly by trained AHA volunteers; others are provided by vetted public and private providers. AHA works with and supports existing community services and businesses and avoids duplicating those that are well established.

Groups like AHA, providing this type of service, have been established across the country 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 35 villages in operation and many more in development.

AHA’s launch created a resource that 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. Since those early days, AHA continues to evolve, learning from our members about the most effective ways we can help to keep them confident and safe as they remain engaged in their community.

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES WITH AHA

*Bring your interests and experience 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, library, 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. You should not lift a member into/out of a vehicle. You may offer them a hand to ease them into the car, if needed. 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, using the NV RidesScheduler® system. Our primary means of communication with our volunteers (for rides and other services) is through this interactive portal, RideScheduler®. We also contact you by email or phone (or even text, if you prefer that) in some circumstances. Our staff will provide you with training on this system.
- Once you have accepted a service request, we ask that you call the member at least one day prior to confirm arrangements.
- Members are responsible for the payment of any parking fees, tolls or other related transportation costs.

Home Maintenance

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.**

Among the services our volunteers might be asked to provide are:

- 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

Technology Assistance

This type of assistance is requested quite regularly and we're always looking to add to our cadre of "tech gurus" to assist our members. We do not expect our volunteers to take on tasks that might be better handled by professional technical support (ie. "geeks on call" or the Apple Store), but it can be helpful for members to have volunteer assistance in determining the extent of any issues they might be having with devices or other technology.

Among the requests we receive are:

- Setup and support for computers, cell phones, DVD players, TVs, cable, satellite and internet connections
- Coaching on new software or device operation
- Assistance with online travel bookings, other reservations, and online shopping
- Setup and support for programmable thermostats, light timers, and small appliances

Organization/Decluttering

There are times when a member may require help organizing their home or dealing with their mail. Volunteers can help with such organizational activities. If, in the course of providing such a service, you were to observe 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), please contact the Executive Director and/or the office staff immediately.

The most requested services are:

- Help with sorting mail and preparing bills for payment
- Help with organizing office files and/or kitchen cabinets
- Closet organization
- Assistance with downsizing and clutter reduction

Personal Connections

We know that social isolation is a common problem faced by people who live by themselves. Members may request one or more of the following personal contacts on a regular or periodic basis:

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

Errands

There are times when a member can no longer perform a particular task because of medical or physical limitations. Volunteers can complete these tasks for them, such as:

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

In-Home Convenience

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. AHA volunteers may be called upon to perform some of these services on a time-limited basis:

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

Outdoor Services

If you love to garden, we'll certainly provide you with opportunities to assist our members who may no longer be able to complete all the tasks required to maintain their yard or the outside of their home. Note that our 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. AHA volunteers may be asked to assist with:

- 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

Referrals to Vetted Service Providers

If you have tried to fill a member request and determine that the scope of the request is beyond your comfort or skill capability, you should discuss this with the member and advise them to contact the AHA office to request a referral to a commercial service provider. AHA staff can provide the member the following assistance:

- Recommend public, non-profit or commercial service providers
- Provide an introduction, if desired, to the service provider, including a three-way phone conversation between the service provider, the member, and AHA
- Follow up to ensure that work was done well and at agreed upon price and quality

The AHA referral list has been developed over time through recommendations from our members. Some providers on our referral list offer AHA members a discount. Our staff will work closely with the member to ensure that whatever the question, we'll get the answer.

AHA's Buddy System

Essentially, the Buddy Program was developed in recent years as an extension of AHA's general support services. Some members may benefit from a higher level of ongoing support, either on a temporary or permanent basis. A member is paired with a volunteer who serves as an advocate, liaison, and supporting resource, acting as a good friend might. The Buddy Program

focuses first on building a trusting and understanding relationship. Gradually, the member and the Buddy may pursue enriching activities and tackle practical challenges as they emerge.

Matches will be made by the AHA staff based on availability and compatibility. Occasionally, Buddy volunteers may work in small teams to ensure that all of the member's needs are met.

Administrative Support

If you've worked in a business office at some point in your career and performed organizational and administrative tasks, then you've probably acquired skills that are essential to the functioning of an efficient organization. AHA could use your help. We welcome volunteers to our office and provide training on the following administrative support activities:

- Answering phones
- Preparing mailings
- Filing
- Entering data into a database
- Creating information packages
- Staffing our kiosk/display table at community events

Special Event and Program Assistance

AHA relies on our members and volunteers to plan and carry out many of our programs, events and activities. If you have a particular area of interest you'd like to share, have arranged special events, like to plan parties, have a knack for fundraising, or have another skill set that you think would be valuable to an organization like AHA, please let us know about it. We are always looking for volunteers who want to share their expertise with our members or in support of the organization as a whole.

VOLUNTEER PROGRAM POLICIES

Our General Expectations

Please take some time to familiarize yourself with AHA's policies outlined in this handbook. Volunteers are also expected to:

- Decline any gifts or tips that may be offered
- Attend orientation and training sessions
- Consult with the office staff before assuming new responsibilities
- Be prompt and reliable
- Notify the office staff as soon as possible when unable to report for a scheduled assignment
- Track and report time and mileage
- Protect confidential information at all times
- Exercise good judgment
- Treat members and other volunteers with respect

Volunteer Response to Increased Needs of Member

If, over time, you should observe any of the following indicators of a member's increasing need for support and/or health interventions, you 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 their member folder, together with all updates on that status. We take our responsibility for ensuring member privacy very seriously and keep that information stored securely. Please inform the office staff should you observe or learn of changes such as:

- Pre/post-operative status
- Changes in physical status (decreasing vision, hearing, balance, 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, which could include frequent falls, hoarding, financial concerns, mobility issues, etc.

Volunteer Calls to 911

You must call 911 if a member appears to be having health problems that need urgent attention. You should not leave the member alone until emergency response personnel arrive. The member may not want you to call 911. Remain resolute that this is the AHA policy. Explain that they can make the decision to decline a trip to the hospital, but that an assessment by medical personnel is a wise starting point.

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 and adhere to AHA's Privacy and Confidentiality Agreement. Please do not list a member's name in the subject line of any email correspondence.

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.

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

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 (using the NV Rides RideScheduler® system) to the AHA office each time they complete an assignment for AHA. Accurate and up-to-date records are important to the volunteer since they may be used as proof for taking tax deductions for gas and mileage to and from volunteer assignments. These records are important to AHA as compiled volunteer hours are often requested when AHA applies for foundation or other grant monies. An instructional video and a hard copy manual

are available to assist you in recording your hours online using the RideScheduler® system. Volunteers who provide indirect volunteer hours in support of AHA (event planning, attending committee meetings, etc.) will receive an email from AHA staff at the end of each month with a request to log their hours on a supplied spreadsheet so those can also be compiled.

Extended Absences and Resignation

We are pleased that we don't often lose a volunteer, but sometimes a volunteer's availability will change. 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 handbook are subject to change with notice.

We gratefully acknowledge the kind support of Barbara Sullivan of Mount Vernon At Home and Gail Kohn of Capitol Hill Village in helping us develop the original AHA Volunteer Handbook and in granting us permission to incorporate material from their handbooks.

At Home in Alexandria is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit corporation.