

Volunteer Orientation Manual



Unless someone like you cares a whole awful lot,
nothing is going to get better. It's not. **-Dr. Seuss**

Welcome

It's easy to make a buck. It's a lot tougher to make a difference. -Tom Brokaw

Thank you for your interest in volunteering with Avenues For Justice (AFJ)

Avenues For Justice is committed to keeping our youth out of prison and supporting them in succeeding in life by advocating for them in the courts, their communities and schools.

Youth in the program attend activities at our centers on the Lower East Side and Harlem five days a week from 4-7PM. Activities at the center range from art classes to job readiness.

Volunteers are an essential and valued part of our organization.

Volunteer opportunities range from acting as an assistant for teachers in our scheduled programming to teaching classes to tutoring. Placement is based on matching our youth's needs with the volunteer's interests, experience, and skills.

Before a volunteer can begin, they must complete an application, interview, and reference check.

Once a volunteer is admitted, a schedule and timeframe is established.

Once the volunteer has been placed, the coordinator will describe the role and responsibility of the volunteer and our expectations for that placement.

Youth in our Program

Most of the youth in our program come from backgrounds of instability and disadvantage.

They come to us because they have a court case. AFJ is an alternative to incarceration program.

Many of them have troubled history with school, maybe they've been suspended, dropped out, or their education has been interrupted by their court case.

They may have been exposed to trauma from a young age. They might have been in a gang. Volunteers need to be aware that our youth's personal histories may impact their behaviors, or make them defensive, or particularly sensitive. They may be depressed or have low self-esteem.

Our counselors work very closely with our youth and their families. We are here for volunteers as well, so please let us know if you have any particular concerns regarding the young people you are working with.

Volunteers are paid in six figures... S-M-I-L-E-S. -Gayla LeMaire

Our Mutual Commitment

Once you make a commitment to our program and establish a schedule we expect that you will meet your commitment. Volunteers who regularly do not show up or call us to make alternate arrangements or let us know that they can't make a session will be let go.

We take our commitment to you very seriously, and will do our best to keep you advised of any changes in scheduling. Please let us know how your experience is going and keep us advised of your successes as well as your challenges.

Act as if what you do makes a difference. It does. -William James

Do's and Don'ts

Please do.....

- Sign in and out in our volunteer log every time you come into the center.
- Let us know what you need. If you need any educational materials let us know. We might have them or we can order them.
- Talk to us! Let us know if you are unable to make a scheduled session. If you have any particular questions or concerns never hesitate to voice them.
- Be on time. This shows our youth that you respect them and take your role seriously.
- Schedule all activities with AFJ staff.
- Dress professionally.
- Be aware of your language, behavior and attitude. You are setting an example for youth in our program.
- Maintain well-organized plans and a schedule to provide consistency and structure.
- Remember that attentive non-judgmental listening is essential to good communication.
- Respect our youth's beliefs and values, especially when they are different from your own.

Please don't.....

- Do not wear shredded or torn clothing. Please check and make sure you are not wearing anything that may be perceived as provocative or revealing by a teenager.
- Curse.
- Shout.
- Keep secrets. Please don't encourage youth to think that you will keep secrets. If they want to share something intimate with you, let them know that you are required to share this information with their counselor.
- Communicate with youth outside of the program. Yours is a professional relationship. Volunteers must not email, Facebook, talk on the phone with youth outside of the program.
- Take youth outside of the center. Volunteers must not take youth out of the center, visit or travel with them under any circumstances unless they have received prior approval or are escorted by staff.

Confidentiality

In the context of your volunteer relationship with our youth, you may learn personal information about them. You must consider all client information to be strictly confidential and, therefore, not to be shared or discussed with any persons outside of the agency.

If, for your own educational purposes, you are required to document your volunteer experience, you must use a substitute name when discussing any youth you are involved with through our program.

"With a giving attitude, every situation is an opportunity for success."

The purpose of life is not to be happy - but to matter, to be productive, to be useful, to have it make some difference that you have lived at all. -Leo Rosten

What is your role as a volunteer?

- A friend
- A motivator
- A guide
- A coach
- A tutor
- A companion
- A resource
- A cheerleader
- A listener
- An advocate
- A networker
- A role model

You are not:

- A trained counselor
- A therapist
- A savior
- A cool peer
- A parole officer
- A social worker
- A sidekick
- A parent
- A babysitter
- A disciplinarian
- A psychologist
- A psychiatrist
- A nag