

Enhancing Services to Clients through Community Collaboration.



VOLUNTEER GUIDEBOOK



Office of Volunteer and Community Engagement
DFPS Center for Program Coordination

Volunteer Guidebook

The abuse, neglect, and exploitation of children and adults who are elderly or disabled is a problem with no single solution. Social services workers, however dedicated, cannot address this issue without the assistance of the larger community.

By working side by side with employees of the Department of Family Protective Services (DFPS), volunteers become part of the solution to this problem. Awareness and understanding of the causes and prevention of abuse, neglect, and exploitation are powerful tools that can help make Texas communities safer.

As community members, trained volunteers can deliver much needed prevention and intervention services to DFPS clients. As citizens, volunteers can promote policies and programs which build healthy families. As caring individuals, volunteers can expand DFPS efforts in creating a network of community resources which support and nurture Texas families in need.

Each volunteer has a unique contribution to give to those citizens least able to protect themselves. On behalf of the DFPS staff, please accept our welcome as we join together to help strengthen Texas families.

Jennifer Sims
Director, Center for Consumer and External Affairs

DFPS MISSION

The mission of DFPS is to protect children, the elderly, and people with disabilities from abuse, neglect, and exploitation by providing innovative and effective services to families and vulnerable individuals in their community. **To Protect the Unprotected.**

DFPS VISION

DFPS envisions an outcome-driven service delivery system that centers on client needs while being accountable to the citizens of Texas. To accomplish this vision, we will collaborate with community members, stakeholders, and other public and private partners.

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WHAT IS DFPS?

The Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS) continues the work of the former Texas Department of Protective and Regulatory Services to protect children, adults who are older or have disabilities and are living at home or in state facilities, and to license day-care homes, day-care centers, and registered family homes. The Department also manages community-based programs that prevent delinquency, abuse, neglect, and exploitation of Texas children.

DFPS services are provided by about 10,000 paid employees and an equal number of volunteers working out of more than 254 DFPS offices across Texas.

Originally created in 1991 by the 72nd Texas Legislature, PRS became the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS) in 2004 as part of the health and human services (HHS) reorganization passed by the 78th Texas Legislature. A nine-member council appointed by the Governor of Texas advises the HHSC Executive Commissioner and the DFPS Commissioner, and ensures the input of all system stakeholders.

WHO DOES DFPS SERVE?

DFPS clients include:

- abused or neglected children and their families;
- children deprived of parental support;
- foster and adoptive families;
- children in day-care and residential-care facilities;
- elderly and disabled people who are abused, neglected, or exploited; and
- adults who are served in mental health and mental retardation facilities.

HOW DOES DFPS HELP?

The HHSC Executive Commissioner, with the approval of the Governor, appoints the DFPS Commissioner. The Department is divided into operational and support divisions that work in concert to allow the Department to accomplish its mission of providing services to the State's most vulnerable citizens.

Those divisions are:

- Internal Audit;
- Office of the Deputy Commissioner;
- Adult Protective Services;
- Child Protective Services;
- Child Care Licensing;
- Purchased Client Services;
- Office of the Chief Financial Officer; and
- Office of the Chief Operating Officer.

ADULT PROTECTIVE SERVICES

APS investigates reports of abuse, neglect, and exploitation of people who are elderly or have disabilities, either living at home or in facilities licensed by other Texas State agencies. When abuse, neglect, or exploitation has been confirmed, APS staff provide or arrange for protective services, which may include referral to other programs, respite care, guardianship, emergency assistance with food, shelter, and medical care, transportation, counseling, or other remedies. In addition, APS conducts investigations in facilities regulated by HHSC agencies.

CHILD CARE LICENSING

CCL safeguards the basic health, safety, and well being of Texas children by developing and enforcing minimum standards for child-care operations. In addition, CCL receives and investigates complaints and serious incidents involving child care and residential care facilities.

Child Care Licensing staff are responsible for the regulation of home-based and center-based operations. Residential child-care licensing staff regulate privately and publicly owned residential child-care facilities, such as basic child-care institutions, emergency shelters, residential treatment centers, and child-placing agencies.

CHILD PROTECTIVE SERVICES

CPS receives and investigates reports of child abuse and neglect, works with families to resolve problems that put children at risk, and administers foster care and adoption programs. CPS also helps youth raised in foster homes gain the skills needed to enter adulthood successfully.

CPS encourages parents and other family members to solve the problems that led to the abuse or neglect. The program's aim is to prevent further harm to children while still preserving the family unit. If this is not possible, DFPS may petition the court to remove the children from their homes and place them temporarily with foster care families. If CPS staff and the biological family cannot resolve the problems to allow the children to live at home safely, the agency may recommend to the court that the parent-child relationship be terminated and the children be placed in adoptive homes.

Families are served by agencies that contract with DFPS to make available crisis intervention services, family and individual counseling, and short-term emergency residential care.

PURCHASED CLIENT SERVICES

Created in FY 2004, Purchased Client Services (PCS) combines the areas of Prevention and Early Intervention programs, residential child-care contracts, and statewide purchase of service contracts, as well as the risk management, quality assurance and contract policy functions of the former Contract Administration Division. The Contract Performance division of PCS provides state office and regional support towards measuring and enhancing contractor performance.

SUPPORT DIVISIONS

Office of the Deputy Commissioner

The Deputy Commissioner works closely with the Commissioner to provide vision, leadership, and strategic direction for DFPS, and acts as and represents the Commissioner in his absence. The Deputy Commissioner provides leadership and oversight to DFPS' Center for Policy, Innovation and Professional Development, Center for Program Coordination, and Center for External and Consumer Affairs.

Center for Policy and Innovation provides oversight, direction and technical assistance regarding program policies and procedures, and coordinates DFPS program policies with HHSC policy standards. This Center also develops best practices and training for DFPS program staff, and coordinates with the Center for Consumer and External Affairs to ensure stakeholders' involvement in program policy development.

Center for Program Coordination coordinates DFPS cross-program operations and processes internally, with HHSC, with other state agencies, and throughout the health and human services system, and ensures integrated approaches to program service delivery. The CPC oversees the DFPS Renewal effort to insure reform goals are achieved transitioned to regular business planning and are responsible for any large-scale project management.

Center for Consumer and External Affairs provides centralized support to the DFPS Council, maintains productive stakeholder relations, and provides a central location for public and stakeholder input to and information from the department. This Center contains the Office of Consumer Affairs, Office of Government Relations, Office of Communications and the Office of Volunteer & Community Engagement. The Center performs customer service functions as required in the Texas Government Code, Chapter 2114, coordinates and develops program public awareness activities, and coordinates consumer and external affairs activities.

Office of the Chief Financial Officer

The Chief Financial Officer reports directly to the DFPS Commissioner and oversees the divisions of Budget, Federal Funds, and Accounting.

Budget Division functions include development of the Legislative Appropriation Request (LAR), providing decision-makers with budget and management information, developing and monitoring the annual operating budgets and establishing budget policies and procedures.

Federal Funds Division functions include support, technical assistance, tracking and oversight for federal funding initiatives. This division reviews and analyzes costs, programs, and federal claims to ensure the agency is claiming all eligible costs and tracks/analyzes federal legislation related to funding.

Accounting Division functions include processing payment vouchers (including travel) and payroll, maintaining agency accounting system and other related systems and tools, and establishing accounting policies and procedures.

Office of the Chief Operating Officer

The Chief Operating Officer reports directly to the DFPS Commissioner and oversees the divisions of Statewide Intake, Information Resource Management, Legal Services, Program Support, Contract Oversight & Support and Management Support.

Statewide Intake is the Texas Abuse Hotline, which serves as the central point of contact for reports of abuse, neglect and exploitation of vulnerable Texans, 24 hours a day, 7 days per week, 365 days per year. In addition to phone calls, Statewide Intake receives faxes, letters, and Internet reports that are reviewed, assessed and entered into the DFPS automation system by an intake worker.

Information Resource Management provides data collection, storage, retrieval, telecommunications, and design and development of information systems in partnership with staff to serve consumers, and is responsible for the leadership, administration, operations, and budget decision-making for the IT division.

Legal Services provides the legal counsel, training, and services needed to support the agency's mission and to ensure that the agency complies with all applicable state and federal laws. The division assists with the legal representation of the agency.

Program Support provides the day-to-day direction, guidance and coordination for the agency's program support functions including client services information system support and testing, client services application security and data retrieval, and facility management oversight and coordination.

Contract Oversight & Support provides the development and maintenance of agency-wide policies and procedures for the contract lifecycle. The COS unit provides expertise and infrastructure necessary to ensure that DFPS contracting results in quality services, high accountability, minimized risk, and optimal value.

Management Support provides the day-to-day direction, guidance and coordination for the agency's management service functions including project management and coordination, management information analysis, and data collection and reporting. The section works with the DFPS management team on cross-agency operational issues and internal communication in support of the agency's mission and operational goals.

REGIONAL STRUCTURE

For administrative purposes, the agency divides the state into 11 geographic regions. A regional management team, comprised of regional directors from APS, CPS, and other services directs each region. Regional staff assist regional directors.

OFFICE OF VOLUNTEER AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

The Office of Volunteer and Community Engagement (OVCE) directs the overall statewide volunteer program and provides support to regional staff, helping to link community resources through volunteers and community partnerships. It coordinates DFPS volunteer activities with other HHSC agencies.

State Office: The executive staff is responsible for the State Office development and implementation of DFPS volunteer services, which are coordinated through OVCE. The volunteer and community engagement specialist directs and coordinates planning for the DFPS volunteer programs, and acts as local coordinator for volunteers at state office.

Regions: Regional management is responsible for the regional development and implementation of DFPS volunteer services, which are coordinated through regional community initiatives specialists (CISs). CISs are responsible for the development and implementation of DFPS volunteer services and volunteer management coordination and reporting in their respective areas, and serve as liaisons to the OVCE. A contact list of regional management may be obtained from the CIS.

Contact information for the OVCE or regional CISs, along with other information regarding volunteering at DFPS, may be found online at www.volunteerDFPS.org.

WHO ARE DFPS VOLUNTEERS?

DFPS volunteers form a diversified group and offer their services for a variety of reasons. Volunteers may be:

- students in fields ranging from social work to business, who want to receive training and experience;
- persons wanting to explore a new career;
- employees, organizations, and businesses committed to preventing the abuse, neglect, and exploitation of children, the elderly, and disabled;
- teenagers;
- professionals in all areas of the community who wish to share their expertise;
- stay-at-home parents who want to maintain their skills or remain actively involved in the larger community;
- senior citizens who want to remain active and make a contribution;
- corporate, civic, church, or student groups lending a helping hand;
- all who have a passion for helping the vulnerable citizens in their community.

HOW VOLUNTEERS HELP

DFPS needs and welcomes volunteers with a wide variety of skills, interests, ideas, and experiences. Volunteers may work independently, with staff members and other volunteers, or with individual clients. There are countless ways that volunteers can help DFPS. For example, volunteers might help by:

- counseling families to improve their family management skills;
- mentoring;
- entering data;
- providing training for DFPS staff and volunteers;
- calling elderly people who live alone;
- helping with administrative tasks;
- repairing or adapting a disabled person's home;
- taking a young mother and her sick infant to a doctor or clinic;
- editing or translating agency publications;
- developing grants for community-based projects; and
- working with DFPS in community development.

Every volunteer plays an important role in helping DFPS achieve its mission.

THE PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN DFPS AND VOLUNTEERS

DFPS is committed to fostering mutually beneficial, cooperative relationships between volunteers and the agency. DFPS employees strive to match a volunteer's interests, experience, expertise, and potential with the needs of clients, staff, and the local community. As a volunteer, you can expect:

- a positive teamwork approach;

- adequate training, supervision, equipment, and supplies necessary to complete assigned tasks; and
- reimbursement for travel expenses when possible.

APPLICATION

All volunteers who are directly supervised by DFPS staff or a DFPS-designated volunteer must complete the Volunteer Application form. This form gives staff information on your skills, interests, and availability. You will also be asked to sign a confidentiality agreement (see page 10).

REFERENCE CHECKS

DFPS checks references on all volunteers applying to work with our clients. Please advise your references that they might receive a call or a letter from a DFPS staff person.

BACKGROUND CHECKS

DFPS is required to perform background/criminal history checks on all volunteers who work directly with clients or who have computer security access. These volunteers are required to report certain criminal history and other information on the Volunteer Background Check Authorization form. A driver's license check is required for volunteers who provide transportation to clients.

Staff are required to keep personal information about volunteers confidential, including any information obtained through application or background checks.

Criminal background checks and Department of Public Safety driving records can be obtained only with the written approval of the volunteer.

GROUP INVOLVEMENT

Several hundred groups across the state are involved in projects and partnerships with DFPS. Among these organizations are businesses, churches, civic groups, schools, and community and professional organizations.

In certain cases, when deemed appropriate for the task at hand, an organization working on a DFPS project may follow group application procedure (contained in volunteer policy) and need not process each member of the group on a Volunteer Application form. However, if client information is to be shared with the group, every volunteer must sign a confidentiality agreement, and clients must agree to the release of information. All procedural requirements must be strictly adhered to.

ORIENTATION

Before you begin work with DFPS, your supervisor will discuss the following items with you:

- job basics, types of training available, computer training (if applicable);
- volunteer work rules and standards of conduct;
- schedule and time commitments;
- location of work space;

- procedures for obtaining needed supplies;
- location of parking, restrooms, water fountains, and snack and coffee machines;
- reporting and recordkeeping requirements, and other office policies;
- legal protection, liability, immunity; and
- insurance and accident reporting.

In addition, supervisors will introduce the new volunteer to other staff with whom they may be working.

IDENTIFICATION

For reasons of security, the agency recommends that volunteers carry a DFPS photo identification card when working directly with clients. Your supervisor or regional community initiatives specialist will assist you with identification cards.

TRAINING

New volunteers receive an overview of the program area where they will be working and formal or on-the-job training. Volunteers working with the DFPS computer system may also be given tutorials and other computer training. Regional training centers and libraries may have videotapes on programs; human services issues, data security, office safety, and other subjects. If funds are available, DFPS may pay for additional training.

COMPUTER ACCESS

Volunteers needing to use the DFPS computer system to perform a job will be required to obtain security access through the same channels as paid staff, and in accordance with volunteer handbook policy. All paid and volunteer staff using computers must sign the Computer Security Agreement. A volunteer may not use another person's sign-on or share a sign-on with anyone.

SUPERVISION

A volunteer can expect to have one supervisor who guides and gives support in the assigned work. Every volunteer working directly with DFPS is supervised by a staff person or designated volunteer who has at least the same level of job responsibility as that volunteer.

Although a volunteer may work with many people, a supervisor should be clearly identified. This supervisor is the volunteer's main contact and is responsible for:

- ensuring that the volunteer receives adequate training, guidance, and instruction;
- evaluating the volunteer's performance and giving feedback; and
- notifying the volunteer of changes in staff, policy, or procedures.

Volunteers are encouraged to enter their own work hours on the volunteer tracking system. If they are unable to do so, a supervisor or volunteer liaison may report the volunteer's work hours for them. In addition, supervisors record and report other Pertinent personnel information and may ask the volunteer to keep records. A

volunteer may also be asked to document interaction with clients according to specific program standards.

If a problem arises during an assignment, the volunteer and supervisor should discuss the problem immediately. As they work together to reach a solution, it is essential that both the volunteer and the supervisor be honest about the problem and clearly state their expectations.

EVALUATION

Supervisors evaluate volunteers' job performances regularly. The evaluations may be formal or informal, written or oral, depending upon the scope and complexity of the job. All volunteers receive a formal, written evaluation at least annually. The supervisor gives the volunteer a copy of all written evaluations.

Your supervisor may ask you to evaluate DFPS and your assignment. Some volunteer supervisors may be providing supervision for the first time and will value the feedback you can give them. Discuss with your supervisor any successes, difficulties, suggestions, or questions you may have.

REIMBURSEMENT OF EXPENSES

If funds are available in their area, a volunteer may be reimbursed for travel and other expenses at the current state rate and according to approved state limits and local program budgets. Each district or program area may set its own local policy for reimbursement. To be eligible for reimbursement, a volunteer must have a signed agreement outlining approved reimbursables and obtain a Personal Identification Number (PIN) by submitting Form 4109. After obtaining a PIN, you must submit State of Texas Purchase Voucher, Form 4116, to request reimbursement. Attach copies of receipts for expenses being claimed to Form 4116. Your supervisor can get you the forms and help you fill them out.

The description on Form 4116 should be written as follows: "Reimbursement to volunteer for (travel, per diem, etc.) to provide services to DFPS recipients under (program code), (program)." Two DFPS staff must sign the form to verify that the volunteer provided the services described.

Volunteers can claim some expenses as income tax deductions. Call your local Internal Revenue Service office for more information.

COMPLETING A VOLUNTEER ASSIGNMENT

Let your supervisor know as soon as possible if you cannot complete an assignment. If you've completed a job and would like to continue working with DFPS, discuss other options with your supervisor or ask the office volunteer liaison about other volunteer opportunities.

VOLUNTEER RIGHTS

Volunteers, as non-paid staff, have the rights summarized below. Consult your CIS or the DFPS Volunteer Management Handbook for more information.

- **Equal Opportunity** – DFPS staff must recruit and place volunteers without regard to age, race, sex, religion, color, national origin, political belief, or disability.
- **Complaints (not involving discrimination)** – A volunteer may file a complaint about any work-related problem. If the problem cannot be resolved informally with the supervisor or the volunteer liaison, the volunteer should contact the regional CIS or OVCE.

IMMUNITY

Volunteers serving in charitable organizations are immune from civil liability for good faith actions taken in the course and scope of their service, according to Chapter 84, Civil Practice and Remedies Code. However, since DFPS is not considered a charitable organization under this law, volunteers working directly with DFPS may not be covered.

If a volunteer was referred to DFPS by a charitable organization, such as the Retired Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP), then that volunteer may qualify for immunity from civil liability through that organization. But in the event of a lawsuit, the volunteer may still be responsible for arranging for legal representation.

LIABILITY AND AGENCY RESPONSIBILITY

Volunteers are not paid state employees. Therefore, in the event of a job-related lawsuit, volunteers are not entitled to indemnification (i.e., insurance against loss, damage, etc.) or attorney general representation (Chapter 104, Civil Practice and Remedies Code). DFPS pays close attention to the screening, training, and supervision of volunteers, especially those who provide direct services to clients, have access to confidential information, or are exposed to hazardous conditions, so that the volunteer is fully aware of the seriousness of the work they elect to undertake. Volunteers who feel under-informed or under-trained for their placement should notify their supervisor immediately.

REQUESTING REFERENCES

DFPS staff are not permitted to release letters of reference or any information about the job performance of volunteers directly to people outside of the agency. However, a volunteer may ask his supervisor for a letter of reference. If the supervisor performed written evaluations, the volunteer may also use copies of these to show level of job performance while with the agency.

VOLUNTEER RESPONSIBILITIES

Volunteers perform many of the same tasks as employees and are held accountable for their work in the same way. Volunteers must keep the agency's confidentiality requirements and observe DFPS policies and standards of behavior and the volunteer work rules and standards of conduct.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Volunteers at DFPS may have access to confidential and sensitive information. It is vital that volunteers fully understand the importance of DFPS confidentiality.

Volunteers must understand that certain information contained in the DFPS files is considered confidential under the law, and much of the information is personal in nature. A volunteer's job responsibilities include the protection of the confidential information and the use of discretion when dealing with it. Confidentiality laws help protect people from discrimination, exploitation, and embarrassment. All volunteers will be asked to sign a confidentiality agreement for the protection of DFPS clients.

PERSONAL USE OF STATE PROPERTY

It is illegal in Texas to use state-owned property such as DFPS files, computers, equipment, or supplies for personal business.

Volunteers are permitted to make brief, local telephone calls. Ask your supervisor which telephone you may use. You may want to give family members or others that number as well as your supervisor's number. Volunteers are not allowed to make personal, long-distance calls at state expense. Each local office determines whether volunteers may use personal credit cards or third party billing to charge long-distance calls.

DONATED RESOURCES

As a state agency, DFPS is subject to certain guidelines and limitations regarding the acceptance and use of donated resources. Volunteers handling donations or assisting units and caseworkers to obtain much-needed resources for DFPS clients will receive additional information and training on these guidelines.

TRANSPORTATION

In most regions, volunteers are responsible for providing their own transportation to and from their assignments. Staff may be able to help by providing information about public transportation or car pools.

Any volunteer using a vehicle on behalf of DFPS must have a valid driver's license and be properly insured for personal liability and property damage, as indicated on the Transport and Essential Driving Duties form. Staff should not ask volunteers to use their personal vehicles on behalf of DFPS unless driving has been officially deemed an essential and regular part of their placement duties, and the volunteer has agreed to that placement. If staff does ask a volunteer to perform a driving task outside these parameters, the volunteer may decline the request.

Any vehicle used on behalf of the agency must have a valid license plate, a valid inspection sticker, and seat belts. If transporting passengers as part of an assignment, a volunteer must use safety seats according to Texas law.

Volunteers should never transport clients unless they have been specifically processed and cleared to do so.

Volunteers accepting a driving placement or electing to transport clients will be provided additional information from their placement supervisor.

ACCIDENTS

If an accident occurs, call for medical assistance if needed and notify your supervisor immediately. An agency employee who has the most direct knowledge of the accident or injury should notify a manager who can log onto AccessHR's Manager's

Center to complete and accident report for the volunteer. When the form is completed, the preparer will scroll down to bottom of the form and click “save” to register the report with the HHS risk manager. A hard copy of the accident report will be placed in the volunteer’s personnel file, and a copy sent to the CIS.

INSURANCE

DFPS provides accident, volunteer liability, and, if appropriate, excess auto insurance to volunteers who are supervised by DFPS-paid staff or a DFPS designated volunteer, in accordance with the terms of the insurance policy. Some examples of exclusions include persons who are uninsured motorists and court-mandated community service volunteers.

Additional information regarding insurance coverage and availability is available through your supervisor or regional community initiatives specialist.

Volunteers are not covered under the Workman's Compensation Act. The State Tort Claims Act may cover medical expenses a volunteer incurs as a result of an on-the-job accident.

ATTENDANCE

Supervisors, co-workers, and clients value a volunteer's work and depend upon the volunteer to be at work at the scheduled time. Failure to adhere to scheduled work hours may have an adverse affect on clients, staff, and other volunteers, and thereby diminish the quality of the contribution the volunteer is making to the agency. Notify your supervisor as soon as possible of any absences or changed schedules so that alternative plans may be made.

PERSONAL APPEARANCE

Dress safely, comfortably, and appropriately for your work assignment. Exercise good judgment and care in personal grooming.

SMOKING POLICY

Smoking is permitted only in designated areas in DFPS buildings. Smoking is prohibited throughout most buildings.

FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

For more information about volunteering with DFPS or any of the subjects discussed in this guidebook, talk to your supervisor or volunteer liaison, or consult program handbooks and other program materials.

TO REPORT ABUSE OR NEGLECT

To report abuse, or neglect, or exploitation of children, the elderly, or people with disabilities, call 1-800-252-5400 or visit www.txabusehotline.org