Foster Grandparent Handbook

Foster Grandparent Program is sponsored by

Foster Grandparent Program is funded by

[Logos of sponsoring organizations]
Dear Foster Grandparent,

Thank you for choosing to donate your time to the Foster Grandparent Program administered by Your Aging & Disability Resource Center, your local Area Agency on Aging. The Foster Grandparent Program provides volunteer opportunities for individuals 55 years and older to mentor children one-on-one and help them with their identified special needs. It is also an opportunity for volunteers to learn new skills, share expertise and gain useful experience.

Your Aging & Disability Resource Center considers volunteers a part of its family and recognizes that you have special skills, talents and certain goals you might wish to attain as well as experiences you would like to share. We aim to meet your needs and interests whenever possible.

We appreciate and are very grateful for your time and your talents. We hope in your tenure as a Foster Grandparent, you will acquire treasured assets like new relationships, accomplishments, gratification and happiness.

This handbook provides basic information about the Foster Grandparent Program. The Handbook is written in compliance with the policies and regulations of the Corporation for National and Community Service and the Foster Grandparent Program.

The policies in this handbook replace any others that precede them. Since it is impossible to anticipate every situation, special circumstances that are not covered in the handbook will be addressed by the Foster Grandparent Project Director, and if necessary, the appropriate committee of the Board of Directors. Changes in these policies may occur as the Program evolves and as the Corporation for National and Community Service makes changes to its policies and regulations. You may periodically receive updated pages of the handbook to reflect any changes.

Thank you for being a Foster Grandparent!
Foster Grandparent Program Staff
FOSTER GRANDPARENT PROGRAM
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ELIGIBILITY

A. Program Requirements

Foster Grandparent volunteers must:

- Be age 55 years and older
- Be determined by a physical examination to be capable of serving without detriment to either oneself or the client served
- Be willing to accept supervision and change in assignments as required
- Serve 15-20 or more hours each week
- Meet the annual income requirement set by Corporation for National & Community Service.
- Attend a four (4) hour training/education session each month (In Service)
- Adhere to the core values of humility, gratitude, respect and accountability

B. Equal Opportunity

Volunteers may not be restricted on the basis of education, employment experience, citizenship, race, creed, religion, color, national origin, sex, handicap or political affiliation.

C. Income Requirements

Volunteers:

- may not have an annual total income exceeding the income eligibility guidelines set by the Corporation for National & Community Service.

  \textit{A statement of total income must be signed at the time a volunteer is registered in the Program and annually thereafter.}

- are required to report personal income annually (Annual Income Review Form) and any changes in personal income or living arrangements as they occur to Foster Grandparent Program staff.
- may not collect benefits e.g., mileage or fill out time sheets from other volunteer programs, while serving in the Foster Grandparent Program
- must provide proof of income stated such as: SSI, Social Security statement, bank statement, pension letter, etc. for self, spouse and/or dependents.
PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

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A. Purpose

Older Americans are a valuable resource to their community. They have time, talent, energy and a desire to serve others. The purpose of the Foster Grandparent Program is to provide meaningful, part-time volunteer opportunities for persons age 55 and over, giving support person- to- person services to children. The goal of the Program is to enable low income persons to remain physically and mentally active and help address community needs by contributing their skills from life’s experience.

B. History Timeline

The Foster Grandparent program was originally developed in 1965 as a cooperative effort between the Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO), under the Older Americans Act of 1965. In 1973, the President asked Congress to authorize an expanded role for low income older volunteers to assist older persons. The Senior Companion Program was implemented in 1973 to serve senior citizens and disabled adults. Today, the program, a National Senior Service Corps program, is authorized under the National and Community Service Act of 1993, and is governed by the Corporation of National and Community Service.

C. Funding

The programs receive their major funding from the federal government. Local organizations and contributions provide the “local match” that is needed for the federal funding. The Area Agency on Aging of Palm Beach/Treasure Coast, Inc. has been the sponsoring agency for the Foster Grandparent Program since late 1997 when the Agency received funding from the Corporation for National and Community Service. The Area Agency on Aging’s Foster Grandparent Programs is funded by:

- The Corporation for National & Community Service
- United Way of Palm Beach County,
- Children’s Services Council of Okeechobee

D. Hours of Service

Foster Grandparents must serve a minimum or 15 hours/week; 20-30 is preferred.

Foster Grandparents usually serve:

1. four (4) to five (5) days per week
2. four (4) to (five) hours per day

Flexibility is dependent upon volunteer’s availability and site need.
E. Insurance

1. All volunteers who drive their personal vehicles to and from their volunteer assignments must provide a valid Driver’s License and proof of insurance coverage listing them as a covered driver. Your personal vehicle liability insurance should equal or exceed the limits of Florida’s Motor Vehicle Financial Responsibility Law.

As a program benefit, the Agency provides the following insurance coverage for Foster Grandparent Program volunteer participants:

A. **Accident/Medical Coverage** provides excess accidental medical insurance directly to the volunteer for personal injury which arises out of the performance of the insured’s volunteer service on behalf of the Area Agency on Aging. Claims are paid only for any covered items the volunteers’ primary coverage does not pick up. This coverage also has a maximum dental benefit per accident ($900) should the accident affect teeth or dentures as well as up to $100 for repair/replacement of eyeglass frames/lenses damaged in the accident.

B. **Liability Insurance** is designed to protect the Area Agency on Aging, and by definition, the actions of any volunteer against injury or property damage claims arising out of covered volunteer service activities. This insurance covers the Agency in the event of a civil lawsuit and covers third party claims against the insured, including providing defense coverage. This coverage does not apply in the event activity is ruled to be criminal.

Should you be involved in an accident or sustain an injury while serving as an Agency volunteer (documented by reportable hours on your timesheet), you must immediately notify your teacher, school Volunteer Coordinator or Principal and the Agency’s Volunteer Coordinator at 561-684-5885. If your Coordinator is not available, contact Karen Roberts or Ligia Hardy at 561-684-5885 X 59204 or 59219.

F. Annual Physical Examinations

1. Foster Grandparent volunteers are required to have a physical examination before being enrolled in the Program and yearly thereafter.

2. The Program does not pay for individual charges for physical examinations by physicians.

G. Meals

All volunteers are provided a $2 lunch allowance on days when they volunteer a minimum of 4 hours.
H. Volunteer Paid Time Off

Volunteers are granted 50 hours of Paid Time off (PTO) per calendar year during their first year of service and 75 hours thereafter.

1. Total PTO hours include sick, personal and vacation time taken.

2. Volunteers who are new to the program may not access their PTO balance during the first 6 months.

3. Foster Grandparents are encouraged to use PTO hours during the time that school is not in session, and all Foster Grandparent Volunteers must request the time in advance.

4. Any personal, sick, or vacation time taken will be deducted from the PTO balance.

5. PTO hours may not be carried over to the next calendar year. Unused hours will be paid out to volunteers in good standing at the end of the calendar year.

6. Volunteers leaving the program after completing the 6 month probationary period are entitled to have their PTO balance paid out providing that they are in good standing.

Holidays
Paid holidays are:

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<tr>
<th>New Year's Day</th>
<th>Veteran's Day</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Martin Luther King Day</td>
<td>Thanksgiving Day</td>
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<tr>
<td>Presidents Day</td>
<td>Friday After Thanksgiving</td>
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<tr>
<td>Memorial Day</td>
<td>December 24th or December 26th</td>
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<tr>
<td>Columbus Day</td>
<td>(CEO decides)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Labor Day</td>
<td>Christmas Day</td>
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J. Leave of Absence

1. A volunteer, upon request, may be granted a leave of absence without pay for a period not exceeding sixty (60) calendar days without loss of status.

2. If the leave of absence exceeds 120 calendar days, the volunteer will be required to make an application for renewal of service.

3. A volunteer having an injury or illness that will require an absence for more than two weeks must obtain and submit a letter of medical explanation and release to return to volunteer service from his/her physician.
L. Recognition

The Foster Grandparent Program is pleased to offer various forms of recognition to the volunteers. Each month during the in-service, birthdays and other significant events are highlighted. In addition, based on availability of funds, it provides polo shirts, and special recognition events. Volunteers are honored, and the Volunteer Stations are encouraged to participate in volunteer recognition activities.

M. Stipend

1. Foster Grandparent volunteers receive a stipend of $2.65 per hour.

2. The stipend should not be confused with an employee pay. It is not a salary. Volunteers are not eligible for State of Florida unemployment benefits.

The stipend may not be used as income against the volunteer when he/she is applying for other assistance programs. The stipend may not affect other assistance benefits, e.g., housing eligibility, etc. The volunteer should immediately speak to the Project Director in the event that another agency insists on including the stipend as income.

Please refer to the memorandum on Page 14 of this manual.

N. Transportation Allowance

1. Foster Grandparent volunteers who drive cars are reimbursed for miles traveled. Volunteers must maintain evidence of a valid driver’s license and automobile insurance that meets the minimum basic insurance in the State of Florida for our records.

2. Foster Grandparent volunteers are responsible for travelling independently to and from their assigned station. No reimbursement will be provided for getting a ride from a third party. Volunteers will not be reimbursed for transporting other volunteers to their regular site.

3. Volunteers who ride the bus are provided a monthly bus pass.

4. Volunteers who travel via the door-to-door van (confirmed by valid documentation) are reimbursed for their travel expense.

5. Volunteers who are drivers in a carpool may not charge the other volunteers, whom they transport, for mileage or the ride. They may include the total amount of miles for in-service days or other special events, if they record the names of the volunteers they transported on their mileage sheet.

6. Foster Grandparents will be placed at the nearest available school to their home.
O. Orientation, Pre-Service Training and Professional Development

Foster Grandparents are given 40 hours of orientation and pre-service training: 20 hours are pre-service training prior to official enrollment. Nine mandatory 4-hour monthly professional development in-services are held September through May. Foster Grandparents learn about the purpose, background, organization, rules, regulations, volunteer site and children's issues.

In-Service Training

Each month, all volunteers in the program meet for four hours of in-service training. This is a continuation of the initial orientation and pre-service training which provides an opportunity to share experiences, to develop skills and to learn about various services and resources in the community.

Attendance at the four (4) hour monthly in-service is a requirement of the Program. Foster Grandparent volunteers may not continue to serve as volunteers if they miss more than three (3) of the ten in-service trainings.

P. Probationary Period

1. New volunteers are placed on a six (6) month probationary period and may be terminated from the program at any time during this period. During this time, the Program staff and volunteer station staff evaluate how the volunteer adapts and follows the guidelines of the program. If terminated during this probationary status, the volunteer cannot dispute the dismissal.

2. A Foster Grandparent may be placed on probationary status as a result of a performance evaluation or disciplinary action. During the probationary status, the Project Director will assess the volunteer and determine if he or she will remain in the Program.

Q. Attire

1. A collared polo shirt with the Foster Grandparent Program logo should be worn whenever possible. This attire helps identify the volunteer as a Foster Grandparent.

2. Clothing should be appropriate for a school setting. Shoes should be sturdy and protective, and no sandals are allowed.

3. An identification badge is issued to each Foster Grandparent. Every volunteer is required to wear the identification badge at all sites and events relating to the Program.
R. Universal Precautions

1. To enhance wellbeing and decrease the incidents of disease, volunteers are expected to learn and use good hand-washing techniques.

2. Foster Grandparents should wash hands before leaving volunteer sites, and use a paper towel to turn off faucets, etc. They will be expected to follow all regulations regarding hand-washing or other health rules at their volunteer stations.

3. Foster Grandparents should not report to school when they are sick, have a fever, or otherwise might jeopardize their health, or the health of the staff, or the children and adults they serve.

S. Criminal Background Check

1. Foster Grandparents are required to have a Level II criminal background check. Any question of criminal activity will eliminate the Foster Grandparent candidate from consideration for volunteer service or continuation of volunteer service.

2. Foster Grandparents may not solicit money from clients for their own purpose.

3. Accepting funds may lead to immediate dismissal. The Area Agency on Aging’s Foster Grandparent Program accepts contributions from the public; however, all donations should be made payable to the Area Agency on Aging and mailed to the administrative office.

4. Foster Grandparents must not engage in personal, inappropriate hands on touching of clients, children or others, including teachers or other staff. Any complaint from Volunteer Station staff regarding inappropriate touching, hugging, or kissing, will result in immediate termination.

**A Foster Grandparent must NEVER be alone with a child.**

T. Guidance and Supervision from Program Staff

1. Supervision for a Foster Grandparent is an integral part of the Program. Each volunteer serves under the direction of a Foster Grandparent Volunteer Coordinator

U. Evaluation

1. Evaluation of abilities and interests is an important component of the Foster Grandparent Program. The evaluation provides a method for assessing the current capabilities of the Foster Grandparent and an opportunity for comments to improve services.
2. Each year, the Foster Grandparent Program Staff provides a review of performance. The Performance Evaluation is conducted to determine adequate performance of assigned duties as prescribed by federal guidelines, the Program and Volunteer Station staff. It considers the Volunteer's mental attitude and capabilities in conjunction with actual performance of duties. On-going Performance Evaluation may be conducted at the discretion of the Project staff and/or Volunteer Station.

V. Incidents and Grievances

Reporting Incidents and Accidents
From time to time incidents occur, including physical injury or complaints regarding volunteers or their sites.

1. Foster Grandparents are to report any incidents to their Volunteer Coordinator, or Foster Grandparent Project Director and cooperate in the investigation of the complaint or injury.

2. Regulations restrict touching and other physical contact with staff, other volunteers, children or clients. Incidents regarding any form of physical or sexual harassment complaint of children and adults will be reported to the State of Florida, Child Abuse Registry. A Foster Grandparent must NEVER be alone with a child.

Grievance Procedure

A Foster Grandparent who feels aggrieved by an action or decision of Program staff may appeal for reconsideration to the Area Agency on Aging’s CEO.

1. A request for a hearing must be made in writing and submitted to the office of the CEO.

3. The CEO decision will remain final.

W. Termination

1. Volunteers leave their duties for several reasons. Some volunteers may respond with enthusiasm, while others are negative about the Program or the individuals involved. Health and problems of aging may become evident and preclude the Foster Grandparent from continuing in service.

2. The Area Agency on Aging encourages every available measure be taken to maintain volunteer service; however, it maintains the right to terminate any Foster Grandparent at any time.
3. If it is determined that the Foster Grandparent Volunteer is not performing satisfactorily, volunteer service may be discontinued. Volunteer Coordinators will provide the action steps that must be taken for the Foster Grandparent to be retained; however, volunteers may be terminated at any time if there is significant cause. Examples of reasons for dismissal include, but are not limited to:

- **Being found alone with a child or children which is grounds for immediate termination**
  - Failure to adhere to the core values of humility, gratitude, respect and accountability
  - Failure to cooperate with volunteer site personnel or supervisor
  - Excessive absenteeism, failing to meet the service hour commitment
  - Excessive tardiness
  - Not relating well to children, including, but not limited to:
    - belittling children
    - being impatient with child
    - complaining frequently
    - talking excessively, unable to listen
    - failing to protect or assist child
    - demonstrating a negative attitude
    - being discourteous
    - exhibiting physical or verbal abuse to child, client, staff, other individuals
    - doing a child's work for him/her, does not promote independence
    - sleeping during volunteer duty or any activity
- Poor health
- Inability to understand and follow directions
- Inability of Program staff to find a placement which is appropriate for the physical, mental, and emotional abilities of the Senior Volunteer, or does not meet rules and regulations of Volunteer Station
- Inappropriate touching, hugging, physical contact with child, clients, staff or other individuals.
- Insubordination
- Using tobacco, alcohol and/or illegal substance during volunteer hours
- Malicious gossip
- Violating confidentiality of clients, their families or staff.
- Carelessness in reasonable safety measures which result in injury to client, visitor, employee, or volunteer
- Neglect of duty
X. Miscellaneous

1. **Personal Hygiene**
   
a) Volunteers’ clothing and person must be neat, clean and appropriate for a school setting.
   
b) While performing assigned duties and in the presence of clients, the use of tobacco, alcohol and/or illegal drugs is forbidden.

2. **Safety Measures**
   
a) Volunteers must acquaint themselves with potential safety hazards at volunteer sites.
   
b) Volunteers should report to the Volunteer Coordinator staff any situation that the volunteer feels is jeopardizing his or her safety.

3. **Political Activities**

   Volunteers are prohibited from engaging in political activities resulting in identification or involvement of the volunteer project with the political activity.

4. **Religious Activities**

   Volunteers must not give religious instruction, conduct worship services, or engage in any other religious activity as part of their duties.

5. **Confidentiality**
   
a.) Keep any information about the client, client's families, staff or other volunteers strictly confidential.

   b.) Any exposure to a client's records, behavior or progress should be treated as confidential information.

   c.) Gossip or malicious use of information will result in immediate termination.
Volunteer Site Responsibility

A volunteer site is a public school, day care center or private non-profit organization that serves children and accepts the responsibility for assignment and for daily supervision of Foster Grandparent volunteers.

The volunteer site responsibilities include, but are not limited to:

1. Signing and returning the Foster Grandparent Program Memorandum of Understanding or Agreement. This memo is a legal written document prepared and signed by the Foster Grandparent Program sponsor and the volunteer site, which identifies program working relationships, requirements and mutual responsibilities.

2. Identifying children with special needs and developing each child’s Assignment Plan. Explaining to the volunteer the child’s specific needs, goals and specific tasks for the Foster Grandparent to carry-out in working with the child to achieve the Assignment Plan goals.

3. Providing a safe working environment for the Foster Grandparent to include screening for potentially violent children who might cause physical harm to the volunteer.

4. Providing supervision, instruction and support to the Foster Grandparent volunteer.

5. Providing orientation to the site, any specific training required to begin service at the site and ongoing training as needed.

6. Assisting program staff by evaluating the performance of the volunteer at the end of the probationary period and annually thereafter.

7. Complying with the volunteer policies of the Foster Grandparent Program.

8. Validating and certifying volunteer time sheets.

9. Advising the Volunteer Coordinator within 24 hours of incidents involving a Foster Grandparent.

10. Completing the Expected Outcome Area of the Assignment Plan for each child at the beginning of the year, mid-year, and end of year; returning promptly to the Foster Grandparent Program Office.

11. Providing recognition and encouragement for the volunteer(s) at the volunteer site, i.e. birthday cards, personal thank you cards. Please include the Foster Grandparent volunteers in your volunteer recognition activities.

12. Preparing a Performance Evaluation on each Foster Grandparent at least annually.

Foster Grandparents must always serve under the supervision of a site staff member at their volunteer site. Foster Grandparents must never be alone with or solely in charge of the children.

The intention is for a Foster Grandparent to be the extra person, not a classroom aide, but the one who has time to work one-on-one as outlined in the Assignment Plans. A Foster Grandparent cannot be alone with a child or be asked to take children to the restroom or office.
MEMORANDUM TO NATIONAL SENIOR SERVICE CORPS STAFF; AMERICORP*VISTA STAFF; CORPORATION STATE OFFICE STAFF

FROM: Frank R. Trinity, General Counsel

SUBJECT: Senior Companions, Foster Grandparent, Retired and Senior Volunteer and Americorps* VISTA Programs – Income Disregard Provisions

It continues to come to our attention that state and local governments, and on occasion federal entities, are not properly applying federal law governing the disregard of payments to Senior Companions, Foster Grandparent, Retired and Senior volunteer and Americorps *VISTA members when determining eligibility for assistance and benefits.

Section 404 of the Domestic Volunteer Service Act of 1973, as amended, (DVSA), states, in relevant part, as follows:

(f)(1) Notwithstanding any other provision of law except as may be provided expressly in limitation of this subsection, payments to volunteers under this Act shall not in any way reduce or eliminate the leave of or eligibility for assistance or services any such volunteers may be receiving under any governmental program, except that this paragraph shall not apply in the case of such payments when the Director determines that the value of all such payments, adjusted to reflect the number of hours such volunteers are serving, is equivalent to or greater than the minimum wage then in effect under Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938 (29 U.S.C. & 201 et seq.) or the minimum wage, under the laws of the State where such Volunteers are serving, whichever is greater.

(f)(2) Not withstanding any other provision of law, a person enrolled for full-time service as a volunteer under Title I of this Act who was otherwise entitled to receive assistance or services under any governmental program prior to such volunteer’s enrollment shall not be denied such assistance or services because of such volunteer’s failure or refusal to register for, seek, or accept employment of training during the period of such service.

In a few cases, government agencies have erroneously attempted to substitute their judgments for the DVSA’s authority in determining under (f)(1) if payments to participants are equivalent to or greater than the applicable minimum wage. Only the Corporation for National and Community Service may make this determination, and to date payments to participants under this Title have not been determined to exceed the federal or state minimum wage, whichever is greater.

Section 418 of the DVSA also states as follows:

Notwithstanding any other provision of law, no payment for supportive services or reimbursement of out-of-pocket expenses made to persons serving pursuant to Title II of this Act shall be subject to any tax or charge or be treated as wages or compensation for the purposes of employment, temporary disability, retirement, public assistance, workers’ compensation, or similar benefit payments, or minimum wage laws. This section shall become effective with respect to all payments made after the effective date of the Act [October 1, 1973]. 42 U.S.C. & 5058.

In summary, (1) a government program may not consider payments to individuals under the DVSA in determining to reduce or eliminate the individual’s level of or eligibility for public assistance or services (2) entitlements to assistance may not be denied because of a participant’s failure or refusal to seek or accept employment or training, including those established for welfare to work programs; and (3) no payments to participants shall be considered wages or unemployment for the purposes of any tax, unemployment, workers compensation, or for similar benefit payments.

In addition, the legislative history concerning this matter indicates that Congress did not want to damage efforts to recruit participants by reducing or eliminating government for them and placing financial burdens on sponsors of the programs. This memorandum should be forwarded to anyone with questions concerning this matter. In the event this memorandum does not resolve the issue, please contact this office immediately.