

ROOM IN THE INN - MEMPHIS
CONGREGATIONAL SHELTER

HOST SITE HANDBOOK

2023 Edition

WHAT IS ROOM IN THE INN?

MISSION

Sheltering those experiencing homelessness
in a safe environment of hospitality.

VISION

Holy Hospitality

CORE VALUES

Building Community on Love and Respect
Welcoming All as an Expression of Faith
Giving Hope and Hospitality in a Safe Environment



SITE COORDINATORS

5 BASIC RESPONSIBILITIES



Organization & Coordination



Recruiting & Supporting
Volunteers



Scheduling



Serving as Liason



Handling Issues & Emergencies

**Using the facilities and people they
already have, congregations offer
life-saving relief to those who would
otherwise face nights on the streets.**

WINTER SHELTER PROGRAM
NOVEMBER 1 - MARCH 31

SUMMER SHELTER PROGRAM
MAY 1 - SEPTEMBER 30

FACILITY NEEDS

SLEEP SPACE

+Beds & Bedding

MEAL SPACE

+Tables & Chairs
+Prep & Serving Areas
+Enough food for Evening & Morning Meals
(Guests & Volunteers Eat Together)

ADEQUATE BATHROOM FACILITIES

+Toiletries & Hygiene Items

SUFFICIENT HEAT & AIR

BASIC EMERGENCY NEEDS

+First Aid Kit
+Fire Extinguisher
+Phone Service
+Clearly Marked Safety Exits & Access

DESIGNATED SMOKING AREA OR NOTED NON-SMOKING CAMPUS



How Many Volunteers Do We Need?

COORDINATOR

Planning Team

SET-UP

Preparing the space for sleeping, meals, and anything else offered

MEAL PREP

Evening & Morning
At home or on site

TRANSPORTATION

Evening & Morning

MEAL SERVING

Evening & Morning

FACILITATE EXTRAS

Showers, Clothes Closet
*Always monitor. 1-2 sets of clothes is sufficient for any guest.

VISITING WITH GUESTS

SPENDING THE NIGHT

Two person minimum

CLEAN-UP

LAUNDRY

Towels & Bedding

TRANSPORTATION

Call 901-467-0122 with any changes to number of spaces available by 4pm.

GUEST PICK-UP

- Location TBD
- 5-5:15pm
- Alert staff that you have arrived.
- Staff will assemble the guests for your congregation and help load your vehicle(s) safely.

GUEST DROP-OFF

- Ensure all guests are present before departing the host facilities.
- All guests must be returned to the RITI campus.
- Please return with guests by 7am

IN TRANSIT

- RITI rules/expectations begin before guests enter your vehicle and remain in effect until they have left the RITI campus the following morning.
- Notify the site coordinator or RITI staff of any issues before the following day so they may be addressed with the guest in a timely manner.

SAMPLE SCHEDULE



SAMPLE SCHEDULE, CONT.



RECRUITING VOLUNTEERS

TIPS

ASK!

- Face-to-face
- Follow-Up on interest
- Offer options for all ages, people you wouldn't normally ask & new members
- Plan an event/meal/info session

BE CLEAR

- Detailed responsibilities
- Time commitment
- Ask for specific duties, rather than general help

SHARE YOUR PASSION

- Why is this a meaningful way to spend your time?
- How does this make a difference?
- Gather and share stories from other volunteers.

CONGREGATION INVOLVEMENT

- Ask classes & small groups to share a night
- Ask clergy to promote during service
- Ask admin to post it the bulletin or newsletter and on the website

FOLLOW-UP

- Begin sign-up process well before scheduled night.
- Send a reminder
- Say, "Thank You!"

The heart of Room in the Inn is the local volunteers who open their doors and welcome in strangers as honored guests week after week.

The volunteers give Room in the Inn - Memphis its power and meaning.

No matter how many congregations participate and how large the program grows, the intimate experience of eating together and sharing stories is the critical element. Each volunteer has a unique opportunity to offer the gift of holy hospitality.

HEALTHY BOUNDARIES

✔ **Dress Appropriately**

✔ **Be Respectful**

To all guests & volunteers. Treat each guest as an individual.

✔ **Do Not Share Personal Information**

Contact information, social media requests, specifics on where you live.

✔ **Do Not Give Rides**

Apart from regular RITI transportation, do not offer special transportation for a guest.

✔ **Cell Phones Away**

Keep your cell phone usage to a minimum. Enjoy your time with guests.

✔ **Confidentiality**

Do not share personal information about guests with other people or on social media without consent.

✔ **Calm Voice, No Touching**

Maintain a calm, non-anxious presence with guests. Never touch a guest without permission.

✔ **Refrain from Gifts**

Only do for/with one person what you can do for/with any & all.

✔ **Each Guest is an Individual**

Be present & listen, but do not expect to "fix" someone's situation.

✔ **Be Honest**

Don't make promises you can't keep. Don't make promises on behalf of RITI.

✔ **Accept Responsibility for Your Actions**

✔ **Use Your Instincts**

If something or someone makes you uncomfortable (guest or volunteer), alert a coordinator so the situation can be monitored and addressed.

HELPING INDIVIDUAL GUESTS

RITi guests often share their personal stories with volunteers at each congregation, and their experiences can inspire generosity and kindle a desire to become more deeply involved with a particular individual. This might include offering special assistance with employment, housing, medical needs, or some other request.

Before providing help to a guest, volunteers should consult with a member of the RITi team. Staff members may not know about the difficulties a guest is experiencing and can provide additional support and guidance. They can serve as liaisons between the congregation and guest in order to protect confidentiality and fairness. Finally, RITi staff members might be able to present a more complete picture of someone's specific needs.

Reaching out is an act of faith. Room in the Inn - Memphis provides a venue for fellowship that can result in empowerment and change. Its staff serves as a sounding board in determining appropriate assistance for individual guests so that a congregation's resources can be used in the most effective way.

GUEST ORIENTATION

WHAT HAPPENS BEFORE GUESTS BEGIN THE PROGRAM?

REGISTRATION

Guests you will encounter at RITi-Memphis have been pre-screened and registered prior to their arrival.

They are known to others in the community who are experiencing homelessness and to those who provide services for the homeless.

ORIENTATION

All guests at RITi must attend an orientation session before staying at a host location. This orientation explains how the shelter program works and the principles of nonviolence and respect. If guests do not follow these guidelines, they will be asked to leave the program for a period of time. The orientation video is available on our website at ritimemphis.org.



GUEST ORIENTATION

WHAT HAPPENS BEFORE GUESTS BEGIN THE PROGRAM?

RULES & GUIDELINES

- Respect (For self, others, property - in words and action)
- Non-violence in words & actions
- No possession of drugs or alcohol.
- Men and women sleep separately.
- All guests remain with group from pick-up to drop-off.

WHAT IF THE RULES AREN'T FOLLOWED?

If a guest becomes inappropriate for the program during their stay at the host site, the coordinator may ask them to leave and offer to call a taxi for transportation back downtown. If assistance is needed in asking a guest to leave, please use the RITi emergency number to have a staff member assist you. If the situation is handled without staff, include it in your Nightly Summary Report to be submitted by 4pm the next day (i.e. Tuesday night hosts submit forms by 4pm Wednesday).



HOW WILL OUR GUESTS ACT?

THANKFUL & TIRED!

Generally, our guests are well-mannered, thankful, and grateful to have a warm, safe place for the night. They may be very tired. It is against the law to be homeless (no loitering), so they are constantly on the move and therefore exhausted.

INDIVIDUALS

Some have a keen sense of humor. Some are college educated. Some you will wonder why they are not stable members of society.

On the other hand, some may mumble (or even yell) to themselves or choose to be alone for the evening. Some may seem agitated.

REMEMBER...

Our guests have had a hard day - or week - or life! They may have been abused, stolen from, assaulted, or otherwise victimized. So they have trust issues.

As long as they are not disturbing the volunteers or other guests, they are fine to stay the night.

WHAT WILL WE TALK ABOUT?

Any number of subjects!

Talk to them like you would any other new acquaintance.

Ask them what they did during the day, or what their favorite food is, or about the most recent big sporting event.

Ask them how they are doing. Then, really listen.

Look them in the eye and offer a friendly ear.

Most of the time, the people they encounter pretend they are not there.

Treat them like a fellow human being.

You will have a lot more in common than you think.

WHAT IF I FEEL UNCOMFORTABLE OR UNSAFE?

If someone is not following the rules and guidelines of the RIT community, tell a coordinator or assistant coordinator right away. They are trained in how to handle a myriad of situations.

If you are just generally uncomfortable, find another task besides interacting with the guests—clean the kitchen, help organize the clothes closet, etc. Even if you are uneasy making a new friend, you can still be a valuable volunteer.

Working with people experiencing homelessness might not be your thing. That's OK. Thank you for giving it a try! But please, if you feel compelled to comment on any of our guests' behavior or personalities, do so away from Room in the Inn. They are most definitely our guests, and we would never want to make them feel unwelcome or judged. They get that enough on the streets. Room in the Inn is their safe place.



EACH PERSON HAS A NAME, A STORY, AND DREAMS FOR THE FUTURE.

WHILE A SMALL PART OF OUR POPULATION IS EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS BECAUSE OF ECONOMIC ISSUES, MOST ARE FACING A MUCH MORE COMPLEX SET OF ISSUES.

PEOPLE WHO ARE CHRONICALLY HOMELESS INVARIABLY SUFFER FROM A COMBINATION OF SEVERAL OF THE FOLLOWING DISABLING CONDITIONS...

Our guests are sons, daughters, parents, grandparents...

• MENTAL ILLNESS

SCHIZOPHRENIA, BIPOLAR DISORDER, AND OTHER SEVERE AND PERSISTENT MENTAL ILLNESS

• PHYSICAL DISABILITIES

PROFOUND INJURIES, ILLNESS, BIRTH DEFECTS, OR SOCIALLY DEBILITATING PHYSICAL TRAITS (SUCH AS DISFIGUREMENT, DENTAL DEFICIENCIES, OR OBESITY CAUSED BY 'SURVIVAL' MENTALITY)

• EDUCATIONAL DEFICIENCIES

INABILITY TO READ/WRITE, THE LACK OF BASIC ACADEMIC SKILLS OR NO HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA

• SEVERE TRAUMA

HISTORY OF SEXUAL OR PHYSICAL ABUSE, COMBAT, CATASTROPHIC LOSS OF FAMILY OR A SIMILAR TRAUMATIC EVENT

• ADDICTION

DRUGS, ALCOHOL, SEX, GAMBLING, AND OTHER ADDICTIONS

• SEVERE FAMILY DYSFUNCTION

ABUSIVE PARENTS, BROKEN HOMES, AND/OR MULTIPLE RESIDENCES/CAREGIVERS

• NO FAMILY OR SIGNIFICANT SUPPORT SYSTEM

TOTAL LACK OF FAMILY OR SUPPORT SYSTEMS DUE TO DEATH, ALIENATION, OR INSTITUTIONAL CHILDHOOD

• LEARNING DISABILITIES

DYSLEXIA, ADHD AND OTHER DISORDERS THAT INTERFERE WITH EDUCATION AND LIFE FUNCTIONING

• DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES

LOW IQ OR BRAIN DAMAGE THAT HINDERS INTELLECTUAL FUNCTIONING

• CRIMINAL HISTORY

EXISTENCE OF A CRIMINAL RECORD THAT SERIOUSLY LIMITS OPPORTUNITY

• LIMITED OCCUPATIONAL SKILL SET

INABILITY TO DO ANYTHING BEYOND THE MOST BASIC MANUAL LABOR

• TRANSPORTATION DEFICIENCIES

INABILITY TO PURCHASE, MAINTAIN, INSURE OR LEGALLY DRIVE A CAR OR OBTAIN TRANSPORTATION THROUGH PUBLIC OR PRIVATE MEANS.

• LIFE SKILL DEFICIENCIES

INABILITY TO MANAGE THE MOST BASIC LIFE FUNCTION SUCH AS HYGIENE, HOUSING, TRANSPORTATION, AND INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS

• PRIOR LONG-TERM INSTITUTIONALIZATION

EXTENDED STAYS IN FOSTER CARE, JUVENILE INSTITUTIONS, MENTAL HOSPITALS, OR OTHER INSTITUTIONS

• GENERATIONAL POVERTY

TWO OR MORE GENERATIONS OF FAMILY DEPENDENT ON PUBLIC ASSISTANCE OR CHARITY FOR BASIC LIVING NEEDS

• SYSTEM NAVIGATION

INABILITY TO EFFECTIVELY NAVIGATE GOVERNMENT AND SOCIAL SERVICE AGENCIES

RITI STAFF

HERE FOR YOU!

OFFICE: 901-467-0122

SHELTER@RITIMEMPHIS.ORG

**FIND NIGHTLY SUMMARY REPORT FORM,
HOST CALENDAR AND OTHER RESOURCES
FOR HOSTING ON THE HOST WEBSITE.**

RITIMEMPHIS.ORG/HOST

(THIS SITE IS FOR HOST USE ONLY, NOT A PUBLIC SITE, PLEASE DO NOT SHARE)