



Volunteer Handbook

MISSION:

Rebuilding lives for a safer community.

VISION:

To provide offenders, former offenders, the homeless, at-risk youth, veterans, and their families the tools they need to become productive citizens.

VALUES STATEMENT:

Our primary responsibility is to those we serve. The success of the Alston Wilkes Society is measured by how we meet our responsibilities to clients, volunteers, investors, other agencies and each other. We operate in the spirit of doing unto others as we would have them do unto us.



The Alston Wilkes Society
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History

The Alston Wilkes Society was founded in 1962 as the South Carolina Therapeutic Association by the Reverend Eli Alston Wilkes. The original mission was to provide rehabilitative services to adults released from correctional facilities in South Carolina. Over the years, the Alston Wilkes Society has expanded its focus to include offenders, ex-offenders, the homeless, at-risk youth, veterans, and their families.

Application and Background Check

To apply for volunteer opportunities at the Alston Wilkes Society the volunteer must complete a volunteer application, volunteer confidentiality statement and a volunteer emergency contact form. The forms are provided by the Director of Marketing & Development at the Alston Wilkes Society's Corporate Office. If additional forms are needed for background checks and medical information, the volunteer will be notified.

Completing a background check plays a crucial role in properly screening persons who desire to become volunteers. Depending on the population served, background checks are required as follows:

Volunteering with youth:

- South Carolina Law Enforcement Division (SLED)
- S.C. Department of Social Services Central Registry for Child Abuse and Neglect
- S.C. Sex Offender (staff completes online with name-no form needed)

Volunteering with adults in one of the Alston Wilkes Society Residential Reentry Centers under the Federal Bureau of Prisons contracts:

- National Crime Information Center/National Law Enforcement Telecommunications System (NCIC/NLETS)

Volunteering in administration at the Corporate Office, Veterans Home or with statewide Community Service Coordinators (at the agency's discretion):

- South Carolina Law Enforcement Division (SLED)

Alston Wilkes Society Expectations of Volunteers

Personal Conduct

Volunteers are expected to follow certain work rules and conduct themselves in ways that protect the interests and safety of all clients, employees and the Alston Wilkes Society. We expect them to be ethical in their conduct as it affects their reputation and success, as well as ours. Volunteers are required to carefully follow all laws and regulations, and have the highest standards of conduct and personal integrity.

Our continued success depends on our customers' trust. Volunteers owe it to the Alston Wilkes Society, our clients, and constituents to act in ways that will earn the continued trust and confidence of the public.

Work Schedules and Attendance

Volunteers are expected to be reliable and punctual, reporting for their assignments on time and as scheduled. Your dependability as a volunteer is essential if you are to be of real service to the Alston Wilkes Society. Always arrive and leave on time unless there is a good reason to do otherwise. If you cannot be at the assigned location at the appointed time, please notify the staff as soon as possible.

Personal Appearance

To maintain an appropriate balance between comfort and professionalism, the Alston Wilkes Society adheres to a policy that establishes standards for dressing and grooming. Personal appearance includes manner of dress, neatness, and personal cleanliness standards and can impact staff morale and our reputation as an organization.

During business hours or whenever volunteers report for their assignments, they should be clean, well groomed, and dressed in appropriate clothes. This is particularly important if dealing in person with customers, visitors and the community. Your supervisor will review our dress code with you and supervisors will insure that all volunteers are dressed appropriately.

Confidentiality

As a volunteer you'll learn sensitive information through the course of your activities. Such information will be disclosed to you out of trust and to facilitate your volunteer activities. You must never pass this information on to others. Protecting clients' privacy and their rights is the basis for creating trust and a successful volunteer experience.

CONFIDENTIALITY IS A MUST!

Policies and Procedures

The supervisor will review the Alston Wilkes Society Policies and Procedures with you. Policies and procedures are for your protection as well as the security of the facility or program. As you become acclimated to your work as a volunteer, you will understand why these policies are in place.

Guidelines for Volunteers

1. Get acquainted with the staff with whom you will be working. Also, familiarize yourself with the facility/program.
2. Formulate some personal goals you wish to reach, keeping in mind your abilities and the time frame within which you must work.
3. As a volunteer, you are assuming certain responsibilities that demand loyalty both to the Alston Wilkes Society and our clients. You will be trained and supervised by a staff member, so be sure to ask questions if there's something you don't understand about your responsibilities and your authority.
4. It is important to be truly interested in your volunteer work and the person with whom you are working. Without job satisfaction it will be difficult to be successful in your role as a volunteer. Job satisfaction should be as important to you as it is to staff.
5. If you are not performing a service that you feel is needed, contact the facility/program director for a new assignment. Your time and your talents are too valuable to be wasted.
6. Be well-focused on your particular duties and concentrate on how you can best fulfill them. Don't be afraid to ask questions. Be aware of your surroundings. You may be able to offer new perspectives and fresh new ideas.
7. You should serve as a good role model, setting an example in terms of behavior. Be supportive, encouraging and friendly, but also firm. Your service will be far more beneficial if the client knows that you will be honest and objective in disapproving certain behavior where warranted.
8. Some clients you work with may never have experienced respect. Unless you respect the client, they will not open up to you and may resist your desire to help. Deal with the present and future rather than the past. If you show clients they can be a success, they are likely to pick up some of these positive feelings.
9. Allow the client to talk. It is important to them to be listened to and be heard. It is likely they have not had anyone who will hear them out. Their values and life experiences may shock you, but listen without judging or condoning. Don't underestimate the client and don't overestimate yourself. Maintain eye contact when dealing with a client.

10. It is important that volunteers are able to empathize with clients. However, empathy should not extend to the point of sympathy.
11. Avoid picking up the client's vocabulary. To use language that is not natural for you may make you seem phony. At the same time, you should not leave the impression of being naive. There is a language understandable to clients. Do not use words that are beyond their comprehension. Be yourself.
12. Please remember that you are a volunteer. If you are told things that are designed to manipulate you against the facility or program staff, please contact the facility/program director if you feel the matter requires closer investigation. If you wish to act as an advocate for the clients, you need to be clear concerning your boundaries as a volunteer.
13. Please report immediately any abnormal or unusual behavior or events to a staff member. Your detection of such behavior can aid the staff in the rehabilitative process.
14. Clients will test you just to see how far you will let them go. Therefore, you must show them you know the limits and will stick to your boundaries.
15. As a volunteer, you must understand that clients know the rules. Since you are in the process of learning the rules, some clients may try to bend the rules or steer you in the wrong direction. Do not depend on clients to teach you the rules or help you learn your job. That is our staff supervisor's responsibility.
16. Some clients can be very manipulative, and volunteers need to be aware that they may have some kind of ulterior motive. Listening to what the client is asking or saying to you, is a good communication skill that will help the client accept "no" for an answer. Some talk may just be letting off steam and not factual. Take the things you hear with a "grain of salt," remembering that there are always two sides to every story.
17. Clients sometimes use touching and/or allusions to sex in their conversations to see just how far you will let them go before you put a stop to it. Put a stop to it from the start. Be careful about physical contact. A handshake is appropriate.
18. Do not let clients isolate you from the other volunteers or staff. If an attempt is made to isolate you, alert a staff member.

Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA) – for Residential Reentry Centers (RRCs) and the Group Home:

A core priority of any community corrections agency or facility must be safety, which means protecting the safety of all – the public, the staff, and the offender population. In recognition of this, Congress formed the National Prison Rape Elimination Commission to develop national standards that will help eliminate rape and other forms of sexual abuse in community corrections.

A federal law since 2003, the Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA) requires agencies to comply with the national standards proposed by the Commission and approved by the Attorney General to eliminate sexual abuse in community corrections. The final version of the standards was issued by the Department of Justice on May 17, 2012. It is important to note that PREA applies to all custodial corrections settings, including prisons, jails, police lockups, private facilities, and community-based corrections facilities. As such, a number of community corrections facilities fall directly under the jurisdiction of PREA, including community residential facilities, pretrial detention, and halfway houses.

“PREA just formalizes and establishes uniform standards to: prevent sexual abuse; provide avenues for reporting sexual abuse; establish support systems for victims; investigate and respond to allegations of sexual abuse; and train staff, clients, and vendors in how to prevent, recognize signs of sexual abuse, and report.”

Staff that engages in sexual misconduct with residents put the safety of their colleagues, other residents, and the larger community at risk, in addition to harming the victim, by compromising the system of power and authority necessary to hold residents accountable and ensure public safety. Meanwhile, inappropriate relationships between staff and residents delegitimize the work of corrections, putting undue strain on the already challenging task of promoting resident accountability and rehabilitation.

AWS Zero-Tolerance Policy

Policy: The Alston Wilkes Society has zero tolerance toward all forms of sexual abuse, sexual harassment, and sexual misconduct. Client-on-Client sexual abuse, Client-on-Client sexual harassment, Staff-on-Client sexual abuse, Staff-on-Client sexual harassment, Staff-on-Client indecent exposure, Staff-on-Client voyeurism, Staff-on-Staff sexual abuse, and Staff-on-Staff sexual harassment will not be tolerated. This includes all gender quadrants: male-on-female, female-on-male, and same gender relationships, as well as collateral contacts of clients (family and friends of clients).

Clients have the right to be free from fear of sexual abuse and harassment and if a report of sexual abuse or harassment is made, it will be investigated thoroughly and with respect to the client’s safety, dignity, and privacy, without fear of retaliation. Staff also has the right to be free from retaliation for reporting sexual abuse or sexual harassment.

The Alston Wilkes Society tolerates neither a staff code of silence nor the mishandling or inappropriate sharing of information or the making of deliberately malicious or false reports.

Definitions:

Staff is defined as employees and volunteers/interns. An employee is defined as a person who works directly for the agency, or a person who provides direct services to clients on a recurring basis according to a contractual agreement with the agency.

Sexual abuse includes touching (either directly or through the clothing) of the genitalia, anus, groin, breast, inner thigh, or buttocks without the person's consent; penetration of someone without their consent; and coercion of sexual contact/penetration by threats of violence or of someone who is unable to consent or refuse. In the case of Staff-on-Client sexual abuse, even if the client consents, it is still considered sexual abuse.

Sexual harassment is repeated and unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, verbal comments, or gestures or actions of a derogatory or offensive sexual nature by someone directed toward another.

Indecent exposure is the display by a staff member of his or her uncovered genitalia, buttocks, or breasts in the presence of a client.

Voyeurism is an invasion of a client's privacy by staff for reasons unrelated to official duties or when otherwise not necessary for safety and security reasons, such as peering at a client who is using a toilet in an area observable by staff, requiring a client to expose his or her buttocks, genitals, or breasts, or taking images of all or part of a client's naked body or a client performing bodily functions and distributing or publishing them.

PROCEDURES:

Any sexual abuse/harassment/misconduct should be reported immediately to the staff's supervisor. If the supervisor is unavailable or the staff person believes it would be inappropriate to discuss with them, they should immediately contact the Director of Human Resources, follow the chain of command for upper management, speak directly to any relevant contracting body, or in the cases of the Residential Reentry Centers and the Group Home, contact the PREA Coordinator.

Staff is required to report immediately and according to policy, suspicion or information they receive regarding an incident of sexual abuse/harassment/misconduct, retaliation against clients or staff who reported sexual abuse/harassment/misconduct, and any staff neglect or violation of responsibilities that may have contributed to an incident of sexual abuse/harassment/misconduct or retaliation.

All allegations of sexual abuse/harassment/misconduct will be thoroughly and fairly investigated. The investigation may include AWS staff, local law enforcement, and/or investigative staff from the appropriate contracting body, if applicable

(Federal Bureau of Prisons, OHAN, etc.). When the investigation is completed, the parties involved will be informed of the outcome of the investigation.

Staff must not reveal any information related to a sexual abuse/harassment/misconduct allegation to anyone other than those who are involved in the investigation.

Any employee who engages in actual or attempted sexual abuse/harassment/misconduct, failing to report an incident of sexual abuse/harassment/misconduct, failing to limit information received about an allegation to those who need to know, failing to cooperate with a sexual abuse/harassment/misconduct investigation, engaging in retaliation against clients or staff who report sexual abuse/harassment/misconduct, and failing to follow any other agency or house policy regarding sexual abuse/harassment/misconduct in which staff was trained, will be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment in cases where sexual abuse/harassment/misconduct has been substantiated. All termination for violations of agency sexual abuse/harassment/misconduct policies, or resignations by staff who would have been terminated if not for their resignation, will be reported to law enforcement agencies (unless the activity was clearly not criminal) and any relevant contracting body. The Executive Director will make the final decision regarding any disciplinary action to be taken.

Establishing Professional Boundaries with Residents

The first step to prevent staff sexual misconduct within an agency begins with assessing your own relationships with the residents. Staff should establish professional boundaries with residents immediately upon meeting them and must maintain these boundaries throughout the duration of their stay at the facility.

- Refrain from overly familiar behaviors with residents, including touching (other than handshakes);
- Refrain from discussing personal matters with a resident;
- Refrain from asking a resident to do personal favors for you;
- Refrain from doing personal favors for a resident;
- Avoid spending extended or unnecessary time with residents in personal areas, including bed- or dorm rooms and restroom facilities;
- Avoid unnecessary one-on-one encounters with residents behind closed doors;
- Refrain from engaging in sexualized conversations with or telling inappropriate jokes to a resident; and,
- Refrain from giving or accepting gifts to or from a resident.

How Does a Volunteer Actually Help a Client?

Each client is a unique individual. Although there is no definite pattern for helping, a few suggestions are obvious:

1. **Be Responsible** - Following schedules and keeping appointments and commitments will avoid adding to the client's confusion and feelings of rejection. To help, you must be dependable; it is your duty to set an example which promotes responsibility in the client. Never break promises you've made, even if they seem to be trivial ones that you happened to make during casual chats. It goes without saying that you must keep your word regarding such things as when you'll visit and the kinds of services you are going to provide. This is especially true when volunteering with youth served by the Alston Wilkes Society. They are counting on your help and relying on you. The establishment of a trusting relationship with the client is a key to your success as a volunteer.
2. **Listen and Understand the Problems** - Until you have figured out the pressures on the client, their needs, interests, capabilities and limitations from their point of view, you will be unable to help. Put yourself in the client's shoes before you give advice. Respond honestly and sincerely. Clients can tell when you mean what you say.
3. **Guard Against Over-Identification** - As a volunteer it is your job to find a common basis where you can relate in a friendly way. The client's problems may be unique; you cannot carry the burden of those problems yourself. You do not have to join the client on their level in order to relate. To feel with the client gives them strength. To feel like the client makes them feel that you are in the same position as they are.
4. **Ask For Help** - If you are uncertain about what to do or what to say, it is always best to tell the client that you will have to get others' input. They do not expect you to have all the answers. Discuss the problems with the facility supervisor/program director.
5. **Take it Easy** - Relationships are not built overnight. The clients will probably be more uneasy about you than you are about them. They may be more concerned about what your "angle" is. Ask clients questions about things they know about. Be careful not to probe because they may not be ready to talk to you. They will open up to you in their own time. Ideally, let them talk, but if they want to learn about you first, answer their questions briefly as you do not want to get too in-depth about personal/family matters.
6. **Accept the Client** - Your goal is to help them help themselves. If you take seriously the belief in self-determination, you will help the client arrive at their own decisions. Assume a non-judgmental attitude toward the clients so you will be able to give them the acceptance they need and want. Volunteers must consider the client's individuality, basic rights as a human being, and show them the dignity that all people deserve.

Volunteer Do's and Don'ts

- **Be yourself:**
Respond honestly and sincerely. Clients can tell when you mean what you say.
- **Discuss problems with staff members:**
You can and will have help with any problem you may encounter. Let staff know of any concerns prior to leaving the facility/program.
- **Ask questions:**
No question is unimportant. When in doubt, ASK!
- **Be dependable and courteous:**
Be on time for your volunteer service. When you recognize you may be late, let the staff know ahead of time.
- **Respect confidentiality:**
Keep client and agency affairs confidential. Respect the need for privacy.
- **Be careful about physical contact:**
A handshake usually is appreciated and appropriate.
- **Be a good listener:**
You can learn a lot just by listening to someone. You don't have to agree with what is being said, but you can be accepting of the person.
- **Don't expect explicit thanks or gratitude:**
Even if clients feel it, they may not be able to express it, or they may be embarrassed by it. Know this: Your very presence does make a difference.
- **Only provide services for which you are licensed or certified:**
If you feel a client needs more intensive services than you are qualified to offer, discuss these needs with your staff supervisor. If you have a special qualification or certification, it must be noted in your volunteer records.
- **Do not give out your address or telephone number:**
If asked, you might say, "I'm sorry, but it is against the rules to do that."
- **Do not take anything in or out of a facility/program office:**
You must have approval from the facility/program director before bringing anything in or out of a facility such as a Bible, a letter, or a piece of gum. You may get involved unknowingly in an illegal or serious incident if you don't check first.
- **Do not take anything from a client:**
You must have approval from the facility/program director or staff supervisor before taking anything from a client. This means anything - a letter, photo, poem etc.

Religion and Politics

Some people become interested in volunteering at the Alston Wilkes Society because of religious beliefs or a sense of justice. Whatever your motivation is, you deserve credit for wanting to offer a helping hand. However, you must not attempt to persuade or force a client to join a religion of which you are a member, or to support a political party which you favor. Respecting each other's rights to freedom of religion, thought, and belief is showing respect for basic human rights.

Remember...

As a volunteer you are an important source of community support and rapport and can serve as an advocate of the Alston Wilkes Society in the community.

Dismissal of a Volunteer

Volunteers who do not adhere to the rules and procedures of the agency or who fail to satisfactorily perform their volunteer assignment are subject to dismissal. No volunteer will be terminated until the volunteer has had an opportunity to discuss the reasons for possible dismissal with supervisory staff. Other grounds for dismissal may include, but are not limited to, the following: gross misconduct or insubordination, theft of property or misuse of agency materials, abuse or mistreatment of clients, staff or other volunteers.

Thank you for volunteering with the Alston Wilkes Society!

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The Alston Wilkes Society is committed to principles of equal opportunity and affirmative action.

Revised 3/20/15