



INFORMATION FOR BUS GREETERS

Thank you so much for volunteering with Team TLC-NYC to greet asylum seekers at the bus station as they travel from the border to safety. You have agreed to help families who have been through hell to be a little safer, healthier, and more comfortable -- and to feel more welcome -- on what is often a harrowing journey, and for that we are hugely grateful.

WHO WE ARE/WHAT WE DO:

Team TLC NYC fulfills critical and unmet human needs of asylum-seekers both on the ground and in real time.

AT THE BUS STATION

_____We provide the following:

- **TLC BAGS** - Ziplocs containing a few items to help make asylum seekers' journeys safer and more comfortable:
 - Snacks
 - Water
 - New face masks
 - Hand sanitizer
- **Hot meals** for asylum seekers who have been traveling for days and might not have eaten in a long while
- **Health aids** such as cough medicine, diapers, aspirin, etc. as needed
- **Additional items** such as books and toys for children, warm clothing and blankets in the winter, etc., as needed and practicable
- **Assistance** in finding and boarding connecting buses or a safe place to wait for sponsor or family member

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- **Transportation costs** in emergencies, including tickets for transportation (buses, subways, LIRR, etc), change fees, metro cards, and cab fares
- **Photocopies of information** and lists of resources for immigrants who are

BEYOND THE BUS STATION:

In addition, we serve the broader needs of several families who have settled in New York. You are welcome to participate in that aspect of our services as well, in addition to volunteering as a bus station greeter. Please contact Ilze at ilzethielmann@gmail.com or email teamtlcnyc@gmail.com for more information about this aspect of our organization.

BEFORE YOUR FIRST SHIFT:

- **If you don't speak Spanish (and even if you do, as some of the people we serve speak other foreign languages): Download and familiarize yourself with the Google Translate app.** It is a wonderful way to communicate directly with travelers and is really easy to use. There is a "Conversation" feature that takes down and then translates what you speak into your phone in real time, and then says it in Spanish. It takes a little practice, so please make sure you know how to use it prior to your first shift.
- **Download and familiarize yourself with the Greyhound Bus Tracker App.** It's a useful way to see when buses are actually expected to arrive. NOTE: The ETAs on this app swing back and forth between arriving late and arriving early, so unless it says the bus is hours late, do not rely on information saying that the bus will arrive late. Be at the station early in case the ETA changes.
- **Print out the GREETER SIGN**, and if you don't speak Spanish, the **GREETER COMMUNICATION SHEET** to make it easier to connect with travelers at the bus station. (You should receive these materials via email when you sign up for your first shift. If you do not, please email Ilze at ilzethielmann@gmail.com to request them.)
- **If possible, familiarize yourself with the layout of the Port Authority --** specifically, the location of the **Greyhound arrival gates** (two levels down from the street entrance; follow signs for Gates 60-85), **Dunkin Donuts** (one level down from street level, across from the stairs leading down to the lower level); the **Greyhound ticket counter** (one level down, across from Dunkin Donuts); the **Greyhound Information booth** (near the gates); the restrooms (near the

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stairs/escalator near Greyhound arrival gates); and **Duane Reade Drug Store** (corner of 42nd Street and 8th Avenue, near street entrance to Port Authority).

BEFORE EVERY SHIFT:

- **Check your email** for a message indicating whether there will be travelers to greet at the bus you have agreed to meet. We will try to provide as much information as possible about how many men, women, and children are expected to be on your bus. If you don't get an email by the night before your shift, please contact teamtlcnyc@gmail.com. **NOTE: If no one is expected, you are not required to complete your shift. However, we sometimes receive faulty information, so if it is practicable and not a huge inconvenience for you to go to the bus station, there might be people to greet despite the information we receive. Again, YOU ARE NOT REQUIRED TO GO TO THE BUS STATION IF YOU HAVE NOT RECEIVED AFFIRMATIVE INFORMATION INDICATING THAT MIGRANTS WILL BE ARRIVING ON THE BUS YOU ARE MEETING.**
- **Prepare or obtain enough TLC BAGS** for the number of people you are expecting (see below for details on TLC BAGS)
- **Contact your co-greeter** if another person has signed up for the same shift, and arrange to meet up 30 minutes prior to the scheduled arrival time of your bus
- **Bring your VOLUNTEER badge** to wear at the bus station. (You should receive your volunteer badge via mail shortly after signing up for your first shift. If you do not receive a badge, please contact Ilze Thielmann at ilzethielmann@gmail.com to request one.)

DURING YOUR SHIFT:

- **Show up at the bus station 30 minutes before the bus's scheduled arrival;** meet outside the entrance to Port Authority on 8th Avenue, between 41st and 42nd Streets.
- **Proceed to the Greyhound arrival gates** two levels down from street level (follow the signs for Gates 60-85). Greyhounds almost always arrive at gates 60-65.
- **Check with the workers at the Information booth** on ETA and expected arrival gate, and, if possible, get the number that is physically posted on the bus (different from the bus number in the schedule) for easy identification. **TIP: It is a great idea to be friendly with all Greyhound and Port Authority employees you**

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encounter. If you have repeating shifts, make friends with them; they can be extremely helpful and it makes the entire experience easier and more pleasant.

- **When the bus arrives, wear your badge and hold up your greeter sign** near the arrival gate. Try to make eye contact and say “Hola” when you see people who fit the description you have received of the people to expect. (However, be aware that there may be other migrants on the bus who have not been identified in advance. Offer any such people assistance as well.)
- **Greet the migrants** (often they will be carrying no luggage, maybe a few plastic bags with their belonging), explain your role, and offer assistance (If you do not speak Spanish, hand them the GREETER COMMUNICATION SHEET as a means of introduction. Then use Google Translate to communicate.)
- **Check their ticket** to determine if they are making a transfer, and if so, how much time they have, or if they need help getting to the subway or the place where they are being picked up by their sponsor or family member.
- **Offer them the TLC Bags.**
- **If you have additional supplies with you, offer them to the migrants.** (See below for additional information.) If not, ask if they need anything (diapers, medicine, feminine hygiene, other hygiene products, etc.), and explain that you can purchase the items at a nearby drug store. (See below for details)
- **Direct them to the restroom, if needed,** and offer to watch their belongings while they use the facilities.
- **Offer to get them some hot food** or buy food/drink if you have time before their next connection - Dunkin Donuts sells affordable, hot sandwiches. (See below for details.)
- **Direct them to the gate where they will board their connecting bus, and tell them when boarding will begin.** You can generally get this information from the departure board and/or the employees in the Information booth. Some travelers will not want or need you to wait with them; others might. Ask what the travelers prefers and respect that preference.
- **If the traveler’s final destination is New York, make sure they are being met by someone or can safely get to where they are going.** If they need to call their contact, offer to let them use your cell phone to make the call, if you are comfortable doing so.

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- If the traveler's final destination is New York, give them a copy of the Spanish-language list of immigrant resources we have prepared, and encourage them to make use of the services listed.

AFTER YOUR SHIFT:

- **IMPORTANT!** Go back to your shift slot on Signup Genius and answer the follow-up questions documenting what happened during your shift. We need this data!

Buying Items for Travelers

- If you purchase food or other items for a traveler, you may be reimbursed by Team TLC-NYC, or you may choose to make the outlays a donation. If you would like to be reimbursed or receive a receipt for the in-kind donation, email a list of the items and the amount spent to teamtlnyc@gmail.com and indicate means of reimbursement desired (Venmo profile, etc.)
- **DUNKIN DONUTS/HUDSON** - Located one level down from the street entrance, near the stairs down to the Greyhound departure gates, this combination Dunkin Donuts/Hudson news sells hot sandwiches, coffee, snacks, various bottled beverages, and even a few drug store items. If the traveler is not willing to come with you to the store (sometimes they have been warned not to follow any strangers anywhere, understandably), then take a photo of the sandwich menu (which has pictures of the food) and the available beverages in the cooler and ask the traveler to choose what they want. (Sometimes it helps to take a photo of the menu even if the traveler is in the store, since they may have to wait on line and it can be hard to see the menu).
- **DUANE READE** - Located on the northwest corner of 42nd Street and 8th Avenue, near the street entrance to the Port Authority. This drug store sells not only health and beauty aids, but also snacks and other items travelers might need.
- **GREYHOUND TICKET COUNTER** - Located one level down from the street entrance to Port Authority, near the Dunkin Donuts. On rare occasions, it might be necessary to change or purchase a ticket for a traveler.

TLC BAGS

- You may obtain TLC Bags through a number of means:
 - **Create your own TLC Bags** with items you purchase, and be reimbursed for the purchase or make it an in-kind donation.

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- The bags should be large Ziploc-type bags containing the following:
 - A bottle of water
 - A snack, such as a breakfast cereal bar or other relatively non-perishable item
 - A small bottle of hand sanitizer
 - A fresh face mask
 - If possible, a toothbrush/toothpaste travel kit
- **Pick up TLC Bags** at one of the following locations:
 - Ilze Thielmann's building at 697 West End Avenue (at 94th Street). Let Ilze know in advance that you will be picking up bags so that she can leave them at the front desk for you.
 - James Wilson's home at [ADDRESS] ([INSTRUCTIONS FROM JAMES])
 - **METRO BAPTIST CHURCH**, 410 W. 40th Street in Midtown Manhattan, between 9th & 10th Aves. (ADVANCE NOTICE TO TeamTLCNYC@gmail.com required; only available Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday from 10 am to 2 pm)
- **Stock up on TLC Bags** at a bag-packing party (to be scheduled once Covid restrictions have been lifted).
- **For volunteers with WEEKLY SHIFTS ONLY: Have a supply of TLC Bags delivered to your home.** Contact TeamTLCNYC@gmail.com to arrange for delivery.

ADDITIONAL SUPPLIES: The Supply Committee is working on a plan to provide an array of additional supplies beyond the TLC Bags for volunteers to offer to travelers. Until that system is established, we ask that volunteers purchase any necessary items requested by the travelers at or near the Port Authority (at Dunkin Donuts/Hudson or Duane Reade) and either get reimbursed or make the purchases an in-kind donation to Team TLC-NYC (email teamtlcnyc@gmail.com for reimbursement or receipt, if desired).

THINGS TO BEAR IN MIND/GUIDELINES

- **What to expect from the people we greet:** People traveling from the border after being released from detention have been to hell and back, generally speaking. Most travelers have been traveling for three days on a bus and have been in detention for any length of time. That is following a months-long journey on foot,

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on buses, sleeping on the ground in foreign countries, etc. to get to the Border -- before being detained.

- + Travelers sometimes have 7-8 bus connections before we see them in NYC. They may be in a terrible state of mind by the time they get to New York. Be understanding and patient.
- + Travelers may have been enroute for 2-3 days with very little food, and will probably need the snacks and hot meal you offer them more than they let on.
- + **Travelers may not trust strangers approaching them in the bus station, understandably. Do not take it personally, and do not force the issue if a traveler clearly indicates that they want to be left alone.**
- + Travelers will be tired and disoriented. Try to find a place for them to sit down as quickly as possible.
- **What to expect of yourself:** We are here to provide short-term assistance and support. We are not here to save people, fix every problem they face, tell people what to do with their lives, probe deeply into their personal business, or offer legal advice.
- **Sometimes we will be unable to find the travelers that we have been told are expected to arrive. This is unfortunate, but it is not our fault, and we cannot let the disappointment and frustration of these circumstances get us down or discourage us from trying again on another shift.**
- **LIMITATIONS ON WHAT WE OFFER:**
 - ***We do not provide long-term assistance to families / individuals we meet at Port Authority.***
 - We are focused on a brief interaction -- sometimes 5 minutes, sometimes an hour -- to help people get from point A to point B in their journey -- safely and with critical needs met. ***That is where the interaction and communication end.***
 - The needs of families released from ICE detention facilities are often vast. In no way can we commit to providing anything beyond a TLC Bag, a hot meal, a phone call, and information to empower families to take the next step.
- **BOUNDARIES MUST BE MAINTAINED:**
 - **Physical Boundaries**

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- **Do not touch any asylum-seeker** - adult or child - unless they extend their hand for a handshake or reach out to give you a hug.
They must initiate this and the exchange must be brief.
- Maintain a proper distance; be mindful of body language.
- Approach families cautiously and with a gentle smile, not assertively or aggressively. Use a calm voice and be an active listener.
- Emotional boundaries:
 - We are not there to “save” families or to be heroes of any kind.
 - While showing empathy, we must maintain a healthy, professional distance to continue to be effective in serving more people in this community.
 - **Helpful Practices:**
 1. The ideal interaction is short and welcoming - though not overly-“friendly” or sentimental. These families have been through a lot; the interaction is about them and their needs, not the needs of the volunteer to feel “important” or “special”.
 2. You may be the first friendly American the asylum-seeker has encountered in their long journey! Present yourself as kind, gentle, listen and be present.
 3. This work can trigger emotions in you: Work to stay aware of how YOU* are doing.
- **Volunteers should NOT do the following:**
 - Take photos of the travelers or the bus station.
 - Ask probing questions outside the specific terrain of our work.
 - Touch the travelers, unless they initiate contact, and then only briefly.
 - Share confidential information with others.
 - Give legal advice.
 - Commit to anything that we may not be able to provide in terms of additional support.
 - Ignore or fail to comply with any rules/regulations established by the bus companies or other onsite security.

SUGGESTED QUESTIONS TO ASK AND INFORMATION TO SHARE:

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- How are you (and others in your group) feeling? Are you/is anyone sick or need medical attention?
- Are you hungry? Would you like a snack or some water?
- I have a TLC bag here that contains some things that we thought you might benefit from. (Explain what's in it.)
- Do you need the restroom? The water in the sink is safe to drink.
- Is this your final destination?
 - [If answer is YES]: Is someone picking you up? If so, do you want help calling them? Do you need help with the subway? [If you can buy them a Metrocard, that would be appreciated!]
 - Do you have any questions that I may be able to assist with? I may not be able to answer all of your questions, but I am here to help you and will do my best.
 - [If answer is NO]: Please show me your bus ticket so that I can help get you to your connecting bus.

WHERE WE OPERATE:

1. METRO BAPTIST CHURCH

- a. Address: 410 W. 40th Street in Midtown Manhattan, between 9th & 10th Aves.
- b. ****Please do not call the church unless absolutely necessary. Please email TeamTLCnyc@gmail.com first for questions!***
- c. **What takes place @ METRO BAPTIST CHURCH**
 - Ship/receive boxes from a registry
 - Bag organization / stuffing
 - Bag pickup (Volunteers will be able to select a time slot to pick bags up before a running shift)
 - Community Dinners

2. Port Authority Bus Terminal

- a. 625 8th Avenue, New York, New York

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- b. ALL Meet-ups for Running shifts happen at the Port Authority entrance 8th Avenue (between 41st and 42nd Streets)**

3. Online

- a. Our website: www.ttlcnyc.org
- DONATE ON OUR WEBSITE! As an affiliate of Grannies Respond, we are able to use their official 501 (c) (3) (non-profit) status to make donations to our organization tax-deductible.
- b. Facebook:
- We have a private (unsearchable) online community for TEAM TLC NYC on Facebook. In order to join this group, you must be Facebook friends with a current member of the group who can request for you to join and then you will need to be approved by an admin. Or email TeamTLCnyc@gmail.com to request.
 - Posted in the group: updates, events, motivation, support, and volunteer opportunities.