



YMCA VAN BUREN CENTER
SHELTER SERVICES

YMCA Van Buren Center

Volunteer Program Handbook

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Contact Us

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SHELTER SERVICES

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Welcome



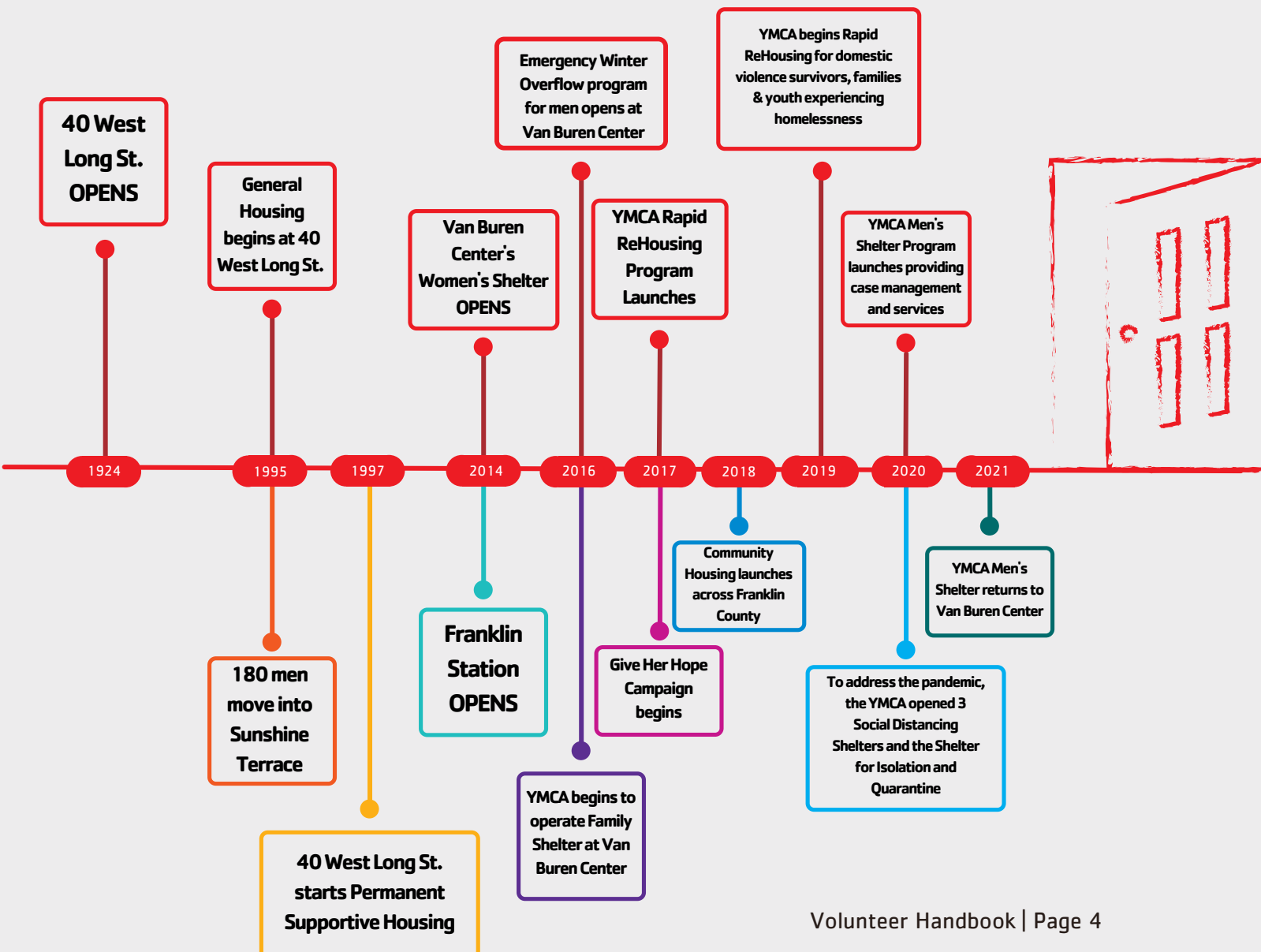
Welcome to the Van Buren Center

Thank you for your interest in volunteering at the YMCA of Central Ohio's Van Buren Center. Volunteers are integral to the success of the Van Buren Center. Our staff depends on the talent and the extra hands to transform one life at a time with love and service. YMCA Van Buren Center provides a vital service in our community by providing safe emergency shelter to families, women, and men experiencing a homeless crisis. The children and adults that participate in our programs and services look to our volunteers as models who can provide guidance to them. Your presence as a volunteer says you care about your community and are committed to doing your part to make an impact. Whether you are a first-time volunteer or a long-time partner your efforts make all the difference. We couldn't do this without you, so we are both grateful and thrilled to have you join us.



YMCA Housing & Shelter History

For more than two decades, the YMCA of Central Ohio has developed a strong reputation for addressing and reducing homelessness in Columbus, Ohio. We envision a community where everyone has a stable and safe place to call home. A community where housing is treated as a human right.





Mission and Vision

Mission

The mission of the Van Buren Center is to support and strengthen the community by compassionately addressing the needs of individuals and families experiencing homelessness. We will provide a safe and healthy environment and assist individuals while they are resolving their housing crisis.

Vision

Our vision is to protect basic human rights and meet needs by providing safe shelter. We instill hope and provide support to our guests for their long-term success through empowerment, community engagement, and teamwork.

Core Values

The YMCA's core values are caring, honesty, respect and responsibility—they guide everything we do.



Programs and Services

Van Buren Emergency Shelter plays a critical role in ending homelessness in Franklin County. The YMCA-operated facility embraces a Housing First approach, offers immediate and low barrier access to anyone facing a housing crisis, and measures shelter performance in order to improve results. The Van Buren Center serves up to 800 individuals every night, including families, women, and men, making it one of the largest in the nation. Since 2014, Van Buren Center has served over 38,516 individuals. Below are just some of the ways we help:



Case Management & Housing Services

Van Buren guests receive case management services and develop an individualized housing plan that meets their specific needs and wants.



Workshops & Guest Resources

Free weekly and monthly workshops are available to Van Buren guests onsite and include help with employment, personal and social development, legal aid, and so much more. We also help connect guests with services and support provided by our partner agencies including Mid Ohio Food Bank, Charity Newsie, and Project Connect.



Additional Essential Services

Van Buren provides our guests with 3 meals a day and offers pregnancy and diabetic snacks to those who need them. Guest also have access to onsite medical providers, free laundry service, computers, hygiene items, towels/linen, transportation, and educational linkage.



Being a Volunteer



What you can expect from us:

- Equal opportunities to everyone who wants to volunteer.
- Offer appropriate training and support and encourage you to develop in your role.
- Celebrate success and recognize your contribution.
- Respect all volunteers and listen to what you have to say.
- Provide information about our policies and procedures.
- Listen and act on your concerns.
- Make necessary arrangements to ensure your health, safety, and welfare as a volunteer.
- Clarify your role and responsibilities.

Being a Van Buren Volunteer means getting to work alongside our staff and other volunteers from the community to elevate guest services, programs, and experience. One of the best parts about being a Van Buren Volunteer is the flexibility you have over the level of commitment and range of opportunities available. We offer volunteer projects that include our entire shelter as well as specific to our families, women, and men's shelter programs and can help match volunteers with opportunities that meet their needs and passions. All of our volunteer opportunities are posted on our website so you can access them and sign up at your leisure.

Who can Volunteer?

Van Buren Volunteers must be at least 14 years of age and cannot be a registered sex offender.

If you are a parent or a child looking for ways to volunteer or get involved please email us directly about possible opportunities or accommodations we can offer depending on the circumstances.

Where can you Volunteer?

The majority of our volunteer opportunities are hosted in our shelter located at 595 Van Buren Drive. We have just started Virtual Volunteering and these opportunities can be completed anywhere.



Volunteer Essentials

Preparing for your volunteer role

- Read and understand this handbook.
- Sign volunteer agreement and waiver.
- Complete background check if prompted.
- Watch Volunteer Training Video after completing Volunteer Orientation.

Finished all these steps? You're ready to sign up for a volunteer opportunity.

Volunteer Position	Roles	Level of Commitment	Required Training
Meal Service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Servers • Dishwashers • Host/Hostess • Dinner Captain • Cafeteria Cleaner 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2.5 hours • Opportunities are available 7 days week. • It is up to you- weekly, monthly, quarterly, yearly- we'll be here! 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete sign up for Volunteer Orientation, read handbook, and sign forms. • Watch Serve Safe video.
Guest Workshops	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing • Legal Aid • Personal Development • Life Skills • Eviction Help • Parenting/Pregnancy • AA/Substance Abuse • Employment • Benefits • Education 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workshops can be scheduled as one time events, quarterly, monthly, or weekly. • Workshops normally run a minimum of 30 minutes. • Daytime/Evening Weekday/Weekend availability. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete sign up for Volunteer Orientation, read handbook, and sign forms. • Background Check • Meet with Resource Coordinator.
Special Events/ Projects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Event prep/set up • Event Crew • Clean up/ breakdown • Donations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1x commitment • 1-6 hours 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete sign up for Volunteer Orientation, read handbook, and sign forms.
Warehouse/ Grounds	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sorting/organizing • Clean up/sanitize • Assembly/building 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1x commitment • 2-6 hours 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete sign up for Volunteer Orientation, read handbook, and sign forms.
Donations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hygiene Kits • Welcome Home Kits • Food/Snacks • Essential items listed on our website. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Donations are welcomed 365 days a year! 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordinate your donation drop-off with Volunteer Coordinator.



Volunteer Essentials

WHAT TO WEAR

Make sure clothing is comfortable and appropriate for the role you've signed up for and if you have any questions please reach out to us directly.

- No open-toed shoes or flip-flops
- No clothing with offensive or obscene language or imagery
- No short shorts or visible midriff/backless shirts
- Jewelry should be kept to a minimum
- Long hair should be tied up when working around food

PARKING

There are designated parking spots for our staff, guests, and visitors at Van Buren Center. Make sure to watch the Volunteer Orientation video to ensure you park in the designated visitor area. There are parking passes available to volunteers that will ensure your vehicle is not towed. If you have any questions when you arrive please make sure to check with a staff person.

PERSONAL PROPERTY

Please do bring items of great value inside the shelter and limit the items you bring with you. Leave purses and all valuable items locked in the trunk of your car. If you have coats or personal property that you need to store while you are volunteering you will be shown an area where they can be securely stored.

PHOTOGRAPHY

In order to protect the privacy of our guests, we prohibit any and all photos/videos of

guests while you are volunteering. If you wish to take photos while you volunteer speak with the Volunteer Coordinator to gain permission first.

We may use photographs of volunteers carrying out their roles for our website, newsletters, or a handout. A signed photo release is a part of our volunteer onboarding process. If you don't want your image used please make the Volunteer Coordinator aware.

FEEDBACK

We are always interested in knowing what our volunteers feel about our volunteer experience and how we are doing. On our website, there are volunteer surveys available so we can hear from you and we encourage you to share with us your experience as a volunteer.

EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES & DIVERSITY

You will be volunteering in an organization that is committed to creating and fostering a culture that promotes respect for each other and values autonomy and individual differences. We will not condone, tolerate, or ignore any form of discrimination or unacceptable behavior. Volunteers should alert a member of the Volunteer Team should they experience an act of discrimination or perceived discrimination.



Volunteer Essentials

HOW TO SIGN UP TO VOLUNTEER

Sign Up Genius is the platform we use for volunteer sign-ups. All of our available volunteer opportunities are posted on Sign Up Genius as well as our Volunteer Orientation/Onboarding. To view our Sign Up Genius go to our Van Buren Volunteer and Donation website to see the current available opportunities. We also send out emails and monthly newsletters with updates and announcements about volunteering. If you would like to receive these updates make sure to subscribe to our mailing list on our website.

GROUP VOLUNTEERS

We offer group volunteering opportunities and have a slightly different process for coordinating and scheduling large group opportunities. If you have a group larger than the available slots for a specific volunteer opportunity that you are interested in participating in contact our Volunteer Coordinator directly via phone/email to schedule and sign up your group.

WORKSHOPS

Workshops at Van Buren cover a variety of topics, meant to address rapid rehousing, housing stability, and barriers to housing. These specific topics can include housing education, employment help, job readiness skills, financial literacy, and a selection of supportive workshops.

The requested topics and classes are often determined as a result of trends within the homeless system, an agency's area of expertise, and the stated needs of our guests.

Lastly, we have a variety of workshops known as supportive workshops. These cover topics like physical and mental health/well-being, self-care, and much more. We also have peer support groups, AA, AOD support, and Bible studies that would be considered supportive workshops.

- All of our workshop facilitators are met with beforehand so that they can learn more about our client population and their specific learning needs.

Workshop Presenter/Facilitator Expectations

1. Please arrive 10 minutes before class starts.
2. If needing to cancel class, please cancel 2 hours before class starts.
3. If needing to reschedule a class date or time, please contact the Employment & Resource Coordinator two weeks before or as soon as possible.
4. Keep an open mind and value the input and suggestions of the clients.
5. Report any suspicious talk or activity to a Supervisor On Duty and follow up with the Volunteer Program Coordinator or Employment & Resource Coordinator.
6. Please do not take any photos, audio, or video recording of guests.



Volunteer Essentials

COMMUNITY SERVICE

If you need to complete required hours for community service and want to volunteer with us there is a different process from our normal volunteer sign-up process. Community Service volunteers will still be required to complete the Volunteer Orientation/Onboarding process that includes reading this handbook, watching the training video, signing forms and waivers, and completing the New Volunteer Sign Up. Before signing up for any volunteer opportunities community service volunteers are required to meet with or talk directly with our Volunteer Coordinator to go over additional paperwork and requirements to document hours and schedule.

INTERNSHIPS

For students looking to complete internships, we have opportunities available. Interns are considered volunteers. To coordinate an internship or get more information about available opportunities as an intern contact the Administrative Program Director, Carolyn Slebodnik.

INTERACTIONS WITH GUESTS

We refer to all of our clients in shelter as "Guests." Our guests look to staff to provide safe shelter while they are experiencing their current homeless/housing crisis. For our volunteers it is natural to have a sense of empathy regarding our guests. Most people volunteer with us because they care about what happens to people in our community experiencing a homeless/housing crisis

and want to help. We welcome you to share your life experiences and stories. However, there are certain types of interactions that are prohibited between volunteers and clients:

- Exchanging personal contact information with any of the guests.
- Romantic/sexual relationships
- Exchanging personal financial or other gifts, favors, gratuity, and money directly with a guest or family.
- Use of physical holds.
- Subject guests to any form of physical, emotional, sexual, or mental abuse (including intimidation or threats).

If you are unsure whether an activity/behavior/interaction with a Van Buren guest is appropriate, please speak with the Volunteer Coordinator.

TIME & ATTENDANCE

If for any reason you need to cancel your scheduled volunteer shift or expect to be late please let the Volunteer Coordinator know as soon as possible. We asked volunteers to provide us with 2 days' notice if they need to cancel but understand that things come up. Please call or text the Volunteer Coordinator and let them know if you need to cancel last minute or expect to be late at [614-512-2847](tel:614-512-2847). If you know 2 days before your scheduled shift that you need to cancel simply delete your sign-up from the Sign-Up Genius page.



Policy & Procedures

1. HEALTH & SAFETY

The health and safety of our guests, staff, and volunteers are of primary concern. It is the policy of the Van Buren Center to provide a safe and healthy work environment for all volunteers. Volunteers must comply with all safety and health requirements by the YMCA, federal, state, and local law. Participating in the YMCA's programs or accessing the YMCA's facilities could increase the risk of contracting COVID-19 or other current or as yet unknown viruses or diseases.

Our facility will continue to require face masks to be worn at all times by guests, staff, and volunteers while in the building. For up-to-date information regarding our policy on masks or for any questions contact the Volunteer Coordinator prior to your scheduled volunteer shift.

2. VOLUNTEER SIGN UP & SCHEDULING

All volunteers are required to sign up and schedule volunteer shifts through our Sign Up Genius platform or directly with our Volunteer Coordinator. For workshops, volunteers are required to schedule all events or workshops directly with the Resource Coordinator.

To maintain our records and ensure the safety of our guests, volunteers, and staff volunteers are prohibited from scheduling their volunteer shifts outside of these ways. For all volunteers who have required hours to complete or track you must sign up for your volunteer shifts either thru the platform or with the Volunteer Coordinator. The Volunteer Coordinator will provide you with instructions on which method is approved based on your specific needs and requirements. If you do not schedule your volunteer shift by one of these methods your hours may not be logged or counted.

3. TIME & ATTENDANCE

We understand that things come up and emergencies happen that may require volunteers to have to cancel unexpectedly or leave early. If that happens please inform the staff contact you have been assigned for your shift or inform the Volunteer Coordinator. For internships, community service, or workshops repeated and or habitual absentees or lateness without notice may result in terminating your status in that role.



Policy & Procedures

4. DRUG & WEAPON-FREE FACILITY

The Van Buren Center expects volunteers to perform their duties with skill, care, and attention. As a volunteer, you must not be under the influence of alcohol or illegal substances while volunteering or during breaks. Failure to comply may result in the termination of your volunteer role. Weapons are not allowed on our property or in our building by anybody in the shelter. Volunteers are not permitted to carry firearms, or any weapon while on the property or in the facility, even if they have a permit to do so.

5. EMERGENCY PROCEDURES

If an emergency requiring evacuation occurs volunteers should look to staff for guidance on where to go if unsure. Do not use the elevator for evacuation under any circumstances. The building may only be re-entered under the authority of the fire department, police department, or management staff once it has been determined that the emergency is over or that the incident was a false alarm.

Designated Evacuation Areas:

- Van Buren Single Side: Grass lawn north of the building, near Children's Services
- Van Buren Family Side: Grass lawn east of shelter's staff parking lot, near the bus stop and apartments.

6. PERSONAL PROPERTY

The YMCA Van Buren Center does not assume responsibility for lost, stolen, or damaged personal belongings, and volunteers are strongly advised not to carry or bring inside the facility valuables or belongings that require secure storage. We have secure storage available for volunteers to use but please be advised you may not be able to access those items until the end of your shift and a staff person can take you and let you inside. Under no circumstances should you leave your purse, wallet, or other valuables on the seat of our car- even if the car doors are locked.

7. CONFIDENTIALITY

Any guest information, either recorded or not which is acquired in connection with any form of volunteer work in or for the program, is considered confidential including information about guest identity, his/her/their residence at Van Buren. Revealing information about a guest may result in putting that person in a dangerous or re-traumatizing situation.



Policy & Procedures

8. SOLICITATIONS

The health and safety of our guests, staff, and volunteers are of primary concern. It is the policy of the Van Buren Center to provide a safe and healthy work environment for all volunteers. Volunteers must comply with all safety and health requirements by the YMCA, federal, state, and local law. Participating in the YMCA's programs or accessing the YMCA's facilities could increase the risk of contracting COVID-19 or other current or as yet unknown viruses or diseases.

Our facility will continue to require face masks to be worn at all times by guests, staff, and volunteers while in the building. For up-to-date information regarding our policy on masks or for any questions contact the Volunteer Coordinator prior to your scheduled volunteer shift.

9. VOLUNTEERS WITH DISABILITIES

YMCA Van Buren Center will fully comply with all duties under the applicable federal (i.e., ADA and ADAA state and local laws to provide reasonable accommodations to allow people with disabilities to apply for and perform their jobs. If a volunteer has a disability and wishes accommodations they should let the Volunteer Coordinator know as soon as possible.

10. BACKGROUND CHECKS

Background checks will be required for all volunteers that are designated as high-level access to our guests. The YMCA Van Buren Center serves a diverse population of individuals experiencing a range of traumas and vulnerabilities. Our priority is to ensure our guests are provided with access to safe shelter and services while they are in our facility so it is our primary concern to take the necessary precautions and maintain a safe space for them while in our shelter. Background checks will be required to be completed upon request by our Programs Team (Volunteer Coordinator & Resource Coordinator) for all volunteers in order to receive clearance to volunteer at the Van Buren Center.

11. REVISIONS TO HANDBOOK

The Volunteer Handbook may be revised at any point by the Programs Team or updated in order to meet our organization's standards and policies and procedures. Notice for amendments will be provided to the community via email or through our website.



Need More Info?

Contact Us



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Melissa Marcum

Employment & Resource Program Coordinator
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Carolyn Slebodnik

Administrative Program Director
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614-689-2020 ext. 8316

 vanburenvolunteer.constantcontactsites.com

 ymcacolumbus.org/locations/vanburen

Volunteer Agreement



Agency

The Van Buren Center, agrees to accept the services of _____ (volunteer name) beginning __ / __ / __ (date).

And we commit

- 1.To provide information, training, and assistance
- 2.To offer ongoing evaluation (feedback forms, surveys, and in addition individual meetings upon request)
- 3.To respect the skills and individual needs of the volunteer

Volunteer

I, _____ (volunteer name), agree to serve as a volunteer and commit

1. To perform volunteer duties to the best of my ability
2. To follow agency rules, policies, and procedures, including requirements of agency and client (guest) information
- 3.To meet time and duty commitments or to provide adequate notice so that alternate arrangements can be made

Agree to:

Volunteer

Staff Representative

Date

Date