



**OUACHITA**  
**CHILDREN, YOUTH, &**  
**FAMILY SERVICES**

# Volunteer Handbook

## 2025

*Policies and Procedures for Volunteers  
at Ouachita Children, Youth, and Family Services*

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*Ouachita Children, Youth, and Family Services serves our most vulnerable population throughout Arkansas providing advocacy, safety, and skill building activities that empower them to achieve lifelong success.*

*Our Community - Our Concern*



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## **WELCOME!**

Welcome to Ouachita Children, Youth, and Family Services (OCYFS)! We offer emergency shelter and support services for youth in crisis. Our emergency shelter is located in Hot Springs. We offer the community services through three main programs:

***Ouachita Children's Center (OCC)*** - serves youth in crisis, ages 6-17. Their needs are great and they come from diverse circumstances. Some are abused or neglected, others are homeless or runaways, and others are in minor trouble in their communities. Youth are referred to OCC by the Arkansas Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS), the Arkansas Department of Youth Services (DYS), schools, community agencies, the Juvenile Courts of Garland and Clark counties, local families, and even by the youth, themselves. The average age of youth who receive OCC services is 15.

***Ouachita Family Center (OFC)*** - an advocacy program providing emergency shelter, quality advocacy outreach services, legal advocacy, and support services to all victims and children of domestic abuse to live free from family violence.

***Ouachita Youth Center (OYC)*** - a program that goes into the community to locate, identify, and make connections with at-risk and/or homeless youth to provide appropriate services directly where the person is, or by collaborating with other agencies and schools. Services provided include: access to emergency shelter, survival aid, individual assessments, trauma-informed treatment & counseling, information & referrals, crisis intervention, and follow-up support.

Volunteers have always been an important part of how we fulfill our mission and we are so glad that you are interested in becoming part of that volunteer tradition. Working with our staff and program, you can make a difference in helping youth and families to achieve lifelong success.

This handbook is designed to help you have the best possible experience as a volunteer. It answers frequently asked questions and provides you with information about our program, our clients, and your role as a volunteer.

Please read this handbook, carefully. It was prepared to give you essential information about the policies and expectations of OCYFS, as well as what you can expect of OCYFS. If you have any questions regarding these volunteer guidelines, please feel free to contact our Volunteer Coordinator.

Thank you again for your desire to be an OCYFS volunteer!

## **OCYFS MISSION STATEMENT**

Ouachita Children, Youth, & Family Services serves our most vulnerable population throughout Arkansas providing advocacy, safety, and skill building activities that empower them to achieve lifelong success.

## **OUR VISION**

Our vision for OCYFS is to be recognized for providing excellent service that leaves a lasting, favorable impression on every person we serve and employ with inclusivity, professionalism, and empathy.

## **OUR VALUES**

As an organization we believe in and practice:

- Respect
- Trust
- Compassion
- Safety
- Integrity
- Stability
- Commitment
- Advocacy

## **HISTORY OF OUACHITA CHILDREN'S CENTER**

History of Ouachita Children's Center Ouachita Children's Center (OCC) was founded in November 1977 by a group of Hot Springs residents and officials in the juvenile justice system. Built in 1928 and listed on the National Historic Registry, the facility – located in an older residential neighborhood in the city of Hot Springs – was initially known as the Interstate Children's Orphanage and later, the Hot Spring Children's Home.

In 1977 it became the Ouachita Children's Center. In 2003, the building and land were deeded to Ouachita Children's Center by the Hot Springs Children's Home Board upon dissolving their corporation. The historic building was dedicated as the Joe Poe Building in 2004. An office was later opened in Clark County to provide support services and case management for youth and families in need.

The early years of OCC were characterized by a "law enforcement" approach in which the shelter served primarily as a detention facility. Beginning in 1981, the shelter began providing long-term residential services, but that was discontinued in 1985. A philosophical change led to a transition from a punitive facility to one of prevention and intervention.

Historically, non-residential services have always included outreach, casework, reintegration services for youth released from Arkansas correctional facilities, diagnosis and evaluation, and from 1984-1988, outpatient and residential drug treatment. OCC also provided supervision of youth who were court ordered to perform public service work, and employment opportunities for youth ordered to pay restitution. Additionally, there have been times when OCC provided an independent living program for older adolescents.

Ouachita Children's Center officially took on a new name as Ouachita Children, Youth, and Family Services in 2018 due to the expansion of programs. Today, OCYFS has an emergency (ES) children's shelter, a Qualified Residential Treatment Program (QRTP) long-term children's shelter, a Runaway and Homeless Youth (RHY) program, an emergency shelter for women experiencing domestic violence (DV) and their children, a DV transitional living program, DV rapid rehousing program, a homelessness prevention program, and a substance and alcohol use prevention program.

Each of our programs includes case management or advocacy, educational support, outreach programs, as well as community engagement. It is our goal to reach our community's most vulnerable populations and empower them to break the cycle of abuse and poverty.

## **CODE OF CONDUCT**

OCYFS is dedicated to serving clients (OCYFS youth and families) and the public with the highest ethical standards possible. All volunteers are expected to follow the same Code of Conduct as OCYFS staff. These standards are as follows:

### **Confidentiality:**

- All information about OCYFS clients is confidential. Protecting confidentiality is also how we protect our clients. Unless you have pre-approval by our management staff, and then written consent from our clients and their legal representative or guardian, it is imperative that you keep all client information confidential. This means that you do not disclose or discuss information about our clients with others - including other clients, visitors, families, friends, or colleagues. If you are uncertain as to what is or is not “confidential,” please ask an OCYFS staff member.
- Protecting client confidentiality also includes using or discussing client information ONLY with those who are directly involved in your duties and responsibilities, not with those who have no direct involvement. This includes communications with other volunteers or visitors.
- In order to assure confidentiality, volunteers may not take photographs, videos, or other recordings of any OCYFS clients. No images, videos, or other recordings of OCYFS clients may be posted on social media (such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat, and others), nor may they be uploaded onto the internet, websites, or shared in emails.
- Should you encounter an OCYFS client (past or present) when you are not on our campus, it is important that you let the client initiate contact, and not the other way around. Because you may be unaware of the client’s situation, you might put the client in jeopardy if you were to initiate contact or, at the very least, cause embarrassment.
- There are rules and regulations that OCYFS must adhere to regarding confidentiality and, as a volunteer, you are expected to comply with these same regulations. Failure to maintain confidentiality may result in your termination as a volunteer and your service to OCYFS, possible civil penalties (including fines), and potential criminal investigation that might lead to penalties provided for by law.

### **Volunteer-Client Interaction:**

- You must be prepared for a high turnover of our client population. There is a high probability that the clients you spend time with for one visit will not be here for your next visit.
- Clients are at OCYFS because they have experienced crisis and trauma and – as a general rule – participation in activities is optional. Be prepared for the possibility that any activities volunteers might offer may or may not be well-attended or well-received by our clients. In fact, there will be times when clients lose interest in an activity and leave or stop participating altogether. This is not to be taken personally because it has more to do with the client’s circumstances and progress than with you, your planned activity, or your intentions.
- Our staff members work with each client to develop a case plan that will help equip them for a successful life. Their progress is carefully monitored by staff to make sure

they are on-track to reach their goals. All clients are expected to be respectful to everyone – staff, fellow residents, visitors, and volunteers; to refrain from physical or verbal altercations; to complete their chores; to attend school or a day program; and to participate in the shelter or outreach schedules.

- ❑ You – as a volunteer – are not a replacement for OCYFS’s staff, but you must function within the boundaries set by OCYFS at all times. Except for certain categories of volunteer positions – such as mentors, interns, or therapists – you can expect OCYFS staff to always be present when you are interacting with clients and during planned volunteer activities. Because OCYFS staff members are present, volunteers are not responsible for handling behavior problems or other situations that might arise with clients. Should you have concerns about client behavior or participation, ask OCYFS staff who are present to address those concerns directly with the client.
- ❑ Some OCYFS clients are children, it is imperative that you respect their physical and personal space. This means that you must refrain from hugging, kissing, or making any inappropriate and non-consensual physical contact. This is important from both a legal and respectful perspective.
- ❑ Although it should go without saying, there is absolutely no sexual contact with OCYFS clients or staff. Anyone who engages in sexual contact with a minor will be reported to law enforcement.
- ❑ OCYFS is a state contracted agency – meaning it is a secular agency. Volunteers are to be extremely respectful and sensitive to the diverse personal beliefs and practices of OCYFS clients and staff. While we welcome people of faith who want to serve as volunteers, we encourage you to express your values and beliefs through your actions. Proselytizing, preaching, evangelizing, or engaging in persuasive conversations or debates about issues of religion or faith are not appropriate. At OCYFS, actions speak louder than words when it comes to how you express your beliefs.
- ❑ You are to refrain from sharing personal or intimate information with any OCYFS client about yourself, your family, your friends, or your circumstances. This keeps both volunteers and OCYFS clients focused on activities and it also protects both.
- ❑ You are not permitted in our clients’ rooms or in our client’s bathrooms.
- ❑ You may not bring drugs or alcohol onto any property owned by OCYFS and you may not volunteer at OCYFS while under the influence. Should you do so, you will be asked to leave immediately, law enforcement may be called, and you will be terminated as an OCYFS volunteer.

- ❑ There are procedures and resources that OCYFS staff can access in order to meet the needs of our clients. You must never insert yourself into these procedures and resources – especially in the presence of the client – and without authorization from the Executive Director. This means that you are not permitted to purchase items on behalf of the client, give clients gifts, run errands, or do favors for clients without prior approval. In addition, you may not communicate with family or friends of clients. If a client makes such requests from you, you are to report this to the OCYFS staff immediately.
- ❑ If there is any interaction or behavior of a client that causes you concern, please bring those concerns to the attention of OCYFS staff as soon as possible.
- ❑ Maintaining professional boundaries with our clients is essential to uphold the ethical standards and integrity of OCYFS. When a client is no longer receiving services from us, it is crucial that volunteers do not attempt to maintain contact or expect access to the client. This includes refraining from any form of communication, whether personal, social, or through social media. This policy is not only a rule, but a legal requirement designed to protect the privacy, safety, and dignity of our clients. Adhering to these boundaries ensures that we respect their personal space and confidentiality, and it helps prevent potential conflicts of interest or breaches of trust. By following these guidelines, volunteers contribute to a safe and respectful environment for both clients and staff, maintaining the professionalism and reliability of our services.

**OCYFS Staff-Volunteer Interaction:**

- ❑ Please be aware that OCYFS staff are highly trained professionals. From Direct Care Staff to Management, our staff members go through extensive and on-going training in order to effectively provide the therapeutic care that our clients need and deserve.
- ❑ OCYFS staff have specific protocols that they must follow to manage the complex needs and demands of our clients. Everything from behavior management to mealtimes to medication distribution is carefully fulfilled by our trained staff.
- ❑ Should any problems or concerns arise with clients, it is the function of trained staff to address these with the client according to our protocols. Your function is to serve as a volunteer – facilitating the work of our staff and the enriching mission of OCYFS through your gifts of time, talent, and resources.
- ❑ In the event of a problematic situation or emergency, it is the responsibility of OCYFS staff to resolve the situation. Should an incident occur that requires staff intervention, it is imperative that volunteers step back from the situation and follow the directions that staff might give to you.
- ❑ If you are concerned about staff behavior, contact that staff's supervisor, a case manager, or OCYFS's executive director.



## **VOLUNTEER PROCEDURES AND GUIDELINES**

- You must be age 18 or older to serve as an OCYFS volunteer.
- You must submit the signed VOLUNTEER CONFIDENTIALITY AND BEHAVIOR AGREEMENT, along with a copy of your PHOTO ID. In some instances, volunteers may also be required to undergo a complete criminal and child maltreatment background check at the expense of OCYFS.
- Please leave your VOLUNTEER CONFIDENTIALITY AND BEHAVIOR AGREEMENT with the appropriate Program Director. If the Program Director is not present, please leave your agreement with a staff member and they will see that it gets to the appropriate department.
- Because OCYFS works with children and youth, you may not bring minor children on campus with when you volunteer. This is for the protection of our clients' dignity and confidentiality since many of our clients might go to school with non-OCYFS children.
- Only animals screened and certified by the City of Hot Springs Department of Animal Services may come on to any OCYFS campus. Please do not bring animals onto our property or into our buildings and DO NOT leave animals in your vehicle while you are volunteering or Hot Springs Animal Control will be called to rescue the animal.
- All volunteer activities must be scheduled through the appropriate Program Director. If others will be joining in the volunteer activity, the names of those volunteers must be submitted to the appropriate Program Director and each one must complete and submit their own signed VOLUNTEER CONFIDENTIALITY AND BEHAVIOR AGREEMENT and a copy of their PHOTO ID.
- On the day of the scheduled visit, please be sure to sign in and note the time on a VOLUNTEER SIGN IN SHEET.
- At the conclusion of your volunteer activity, please sign out, noting the time, on the same VOLUNTEER SIGN IN SHEET and record the number of hours you worked for that particular shift.
- If you need to use the restroom while you are volunteering, one of our staff will direct you to the appropriate restroom.
- Please do not bring your personal property – such as a purse, bag, or electronic equipment like a cell phone, camera, tablet, or other devices – into any OCYFS building. OCYFS has no way to secure your personal items while you volunteer and cannot be responsible for loss or theft of your property. You might consider locking your things in your car and then secure your keys in your pocket or on a lanyard to be kept on your person at all times. Please do not leave your keys or personal items unattended, even for a few minutes.

### **Volunteer Groups:**

- ❑ Throughout the year, volunteer groups enrich OCYFS with special events and projects. When groups want to bring an event or project to OCYFS, this generally needs to be scheduled several weeks in advance with the appropriate Program Director or the Executive Director.
- ❑ Volunteer groups need to provide their CONTACT PERSON information – including name, email, and mobile phone number – to the appropriate Program Director. This contact person must submit a detailed itinerary or project description to the appropriate Program Director at the time of scheduling.
- ❑ The contact person must also submit a list of group participants to the appropriate Program Director 24 hours prior to the event or project date. Each participant must submit a VOLUNTEER CONFIDENTIALITY AND BEHAVIOR AGREEMENT and a copy of their PHOTO ID, which can be submitted upon arrival on the day of the scheduled activity.
- ❑ Should the volunteer group wish to distribute gifts during their scheduled event (such as during the holidays), this must be coordinated and approved by the appropriate Program Director. Because our shelters are TEMPORARY, groups and volunteers need to clearly understand that there is a very high turnover of OCYFS clients. This means that volunteers may bring gifts for “CHILD A,” only to find that “CHILD A” has left and “CHILD B” has just arrived a few hours earlier. This may mean that gifts will be redistributed at the discretion of Management or Shelter Staff in cooperation with the volunteer group.

### **GRIEVANCES AND CONCERNS**

Given the population that OCYFS serves, the complexities of our scheduling, staff shift changes, and other fluid situations, it is easy for there to be miscommunication or lack of follow-up by both OCYFS staff and volunteers. Because misunderstandings and problems sometimes occur between volunteers and OCYFS staff, we strive to resolve these problems as soon as possible by taking the following steps:

- ❑ Volunteers and OCYFS staff will treat each other with respect and in a fair and just manner at all times – including times when there are problems or misunderstandings.
- ❑ All complaints must be fully described by the individuals with the grievance, and those grievances will be shared with the one against whom the complaint has been made.
- ❑ The appropriate Program Director and other Administrative Staff will work in a timely manner to address and investigate any confusion, questions, concerns, or problems that are raised by either a volunteer toward staff, or staff toward volunteers.

- ❑ When misunderstandings occur, we will make every effort to mediate the situation so that there is a positive outcome by first having an informal discussion with the appropriate Program Director to identify problems and to seek possible resolutions. Should this informal approach not bring about resolution, further steps and the possibility of more formal communications may be considered in an effort to address concerns.
- ❑ The appropriate Program Director or Administrative Staff will keep copies of all statements, information relating to the statements, and documentation of decisions will be placed in a separate file maintained by the Human Resources Director.

## **GRIEVANCE/COMPLAINT PROCEDURE**

### *1) Informal Resolution Process*

We encourage volunteers and interns to address any concerns or grievances they may have through informal discussions with their immediate supervisor or volunteer coordinator. This initial step aims to resolve issues in a timely and amicable manner. Volunteers and interns should approach these discussions with professionalism and respect, clearly outlining their concerns and proposing potential solutions.

### *2) Formal Written Complaint*

Should the issue persist after the informal discussion, volunteers and interns have the right to file a formal written complaint. This complaint should be submitted to their supervisor or volunteer coordinator, detailing the grievance with specific incidents, dates, and any previous attempts at resolution. If the complaint or grievance includes their supervisor or volunteer coordinator, all submissions can be given directly to Human Resources (HR).

### *3) Review by Human Resources (HR)*

Upon receipt of a formal complaint, the HR department will conduct a thorough investigation into the matter. This investigation will involve gathering relevant information from all parties involved and ensuring compliance with organizational policies and procedures.

### *4) HR Decision and Resolution*

Following the investigation, HR will outline any actions to be taken to address the grievance and will be provided within a reasonable timeframe.

### *5) Appeal to Executive Director*

If the volunteer or intern is not satisfied with the decision made by HR, they may choose to appeal to the Executive Director. This appeal should be made in writing and include all relevant documentation pertaining to the grievance and previous steps taken to address it.

*6) Executive Director Review and Final Decision*

The Executive Director will review the appeal, along with any supporting documentation provided. Following this review, the Executive Director will make a final decision regarding the grievance and communicate it to the volunteer or intern in writing.

*7) Follow-Up and Monitoring*

After a resolution has been reached, HR will monitor the situation to ensure that the agreed-upon actions are implemented and that the issue does not reoccur.

**CONCLUSION**

There is no higher calling than to give of your time, your talents, and your resources to those who need them the most. OCYFS clients are with us for just a brief amount of time, but the difference that you can make by being a caring and safe person who brings light and life into their lives cannot be overstated.

You may never see these children or families who are in crisis again, but rest assured, you have had a positive impact that they will never forget.

OCYFS staff and volunteers, working together, can offer these children and families an enriching experience as they pass through our doors and across our lives. We are so grateful that you have chosen to be one of those beacons of light to help shine the way as they continue on their paths to a successful life. Thank you!

## **VOLUNTEER PROCEDURE & TRAINING DOCUMENTATION**

### **1. Volunteer Roles & Responsibilities**

To maintain clear expectations and accountability, all volunteers must review and sign a Volunteer Role Description before beginning service. Our volunteer program has two distinct categories:

#### A. Non-Direct Service Volunteers (One-and-Done)

- Do not require a background check
- Engage in tasks that support our mission but do not involve direct client interaction

#### **Examples of Duties:**

- Donation sorting and organizing
- Fundraising event support
- Facility maintenance (cleaning, painting, minor repairs)
- Administrative tasks (filing, organization)

#### B. Direct Service Volunteers

- Require a background check and full vetting process
- Must complete orientation and training
- Work directly with clients in a supervised capacity

#### **Examples of Duties:**

- Assisting with youth programming
- Answering helpline calls and/or Orders of Protection (after specialized training)
- Transportation support for clients
- Advocacy support (court accompaniment, resource navigation)

### **2. Orientation Training Requirements**

All volunteers must attend an initial orientation to ensure they understand our mission, policies, and expectations.

#### A. One-and-Done Volunteers

- Overview of Ouachita Children, Youth, & Family Services' mission and programs
- Confidentiality agreement
- Safety and conduct expectations
- Facility tour (as needed)



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B. Direct Service Volunteers

- Trauma-informed care principles
- Boundaries and ethics in client interactions
- Confidentiality
- Role-specific training (e.g., crisis intervention, advocacy basics)

**3. Ongoing Training & Supervision (For Direct Service Volunteers)**

To ensure the highest quality of service, direct service volunteers must participate in ongoing training, which may include:

- Monthly or quarterly check-ins with a supervisor
- Annual refresher training on confidentiality and client interactions
- Topic-specific workshops (e.g., OOPs, de-escalation techniques)

*Documentation:* Training sign-in sheets, training completion logs

**4. Compliance & Record-Keeping**

- All signed role descriptions, training records, and background checks will be maintained in the Volunteer Files for compliance.
- All background checks and other forms will be kept in volunteer files in the HR office.
- Failure to complete required training or adhere to policies may result in suspension or termination of volunteer service.

**By signing below, I acknowledge that I have read, understand, and agree to comply with the Volunteer Policy of Ouachita Children, Youth, & Family Services.**

Volunteer Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Program: \_\_\_\_\_ Director: \_\_\_\_\_



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