

Spiritus Christi Prison Outreach Men's Program Volunteer Mentor Manual



Visiting men and women in prison and journeying with them as they re-enter the community

Spiritus Christi Prison Outreach is committed to integrity in the work place. Though our ministry often takes place in informal as well as formal settings, volunteers are responsible for high ethical conduct at all times. We value honesty in sharing and record keeping. We uphold the dignity of each person and honor his/her experience and story. We are committed to each person's safety—physical, emotional, and mental—by the wise and just use of our influence. We respect the principles and teachings of Spiritus Christi Church and the Men's Program. Above all we honor the sanctity and equality of each person regardless of the differences of birth or learned experiences.

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What is our mission?

The Men's Program is a part of the Spiritus Christi Prison Outreach. Spiritus Christi Church is a Christ-centered Catholic community reaching beyond the institutional church to be inclusive of all. Jesus Christ is our pastor; therefore we open our church as a spiritual refuge. We hold the Eucharist as the center of our sacramental life. We embrace the challenge of the Scriptures. We are ordinary people joyously celebrating the opportunity to follow Jesus' radical message of unconditional love.

The mission of Spiritus Christi Church is to embrace the challenge of the Gospel, celebrating the opportunity to follow Jesus Christ. As part of that mission, we have founded Spiritus Christi Prison Outreach. The Men's Program is a part of Spiritus Christi Prison Outreach

The Men's Program provides an opportunity for staff and volunteers to provide a loving, safe and supportive group environment for men, either currently or formally incarcerated in County and State jail and prison facilities. We seek to help the Men recognize that they are children of God and that they are beautiful just as God intended them to be. Our mission is to respond to the Gospel call, to visit women and men in prison and journey with them as they reenter the community.

How do we accomplish our mission?

In the Men's Program we provide men, either currently or formally incarcerated in county jail and state prison facilities, with group settings in which they can feel comfortable and encouraged to share and explore deeply rooted feelings and critical issues that contributed to incarceration. The volunteers and participants, working together, create a safe, structured environment where positive change is fostered.

As appropriate, our objectives in the Men's Program may include:

- A structured, safe and supportive group environment
- Respectful, honest and open dialogue and feedback focused on personal growth
- A plan/agreement to work with them on an exit/release plan and provide support to them as they work their program of choice (e.g. Cephas)
- Advocacy with other service agencies
- Honest and open dialogue and feedback
- Provide safe and structured groups for men in and out of jail/prison
- Help men create a solid foundation by connecting men with the community resources necessary to reestablish themselves in the community (i.e. chemical dependency programs, DSS, church affiliations, etc.)
- Following the men beyond Nielsen House after they move on to their next phase of recovery and life

How can you help?

Our volunteer *mentors* and staff play a very important role in creating a safe environment for the men. Listen to what people who have been incarcerated have said:

- *We need someone to listen.*
- *We are worth saving.*
- *Even though we are criminals we are not animals. We need to be treated like human beings while incarcerated.*
- *How do people make it? We need people to show us how they do that.*
- *All I want is a safe place to live.*
- *I need other people to help me...*
- *Please look deep inside yourself before you say we are all bad.*
- *We can put ourselves back together with your help.*
- *It is very hard to ask for help; please do not judge me.*

As a volunteer *mentor* your responsibilities will change as the needs of group members change. Some of the responsibilities may include:

- Becoming a contributing member of one of our groups
- Becoming familiar with and applying the group structure, approach and techniques to insure continuity
- Being consistent in your group attendance
- Providing advanced notice (when possible) to group lead *mentors* when unable to attend
- Deferring to the group lead *mentors* in times of uncertainty during group sessions
- Proactively seeking feedback on group participation from the team to enhance skills to better serve the men
- Proactively providing feedback to other group members in an honest yet supportive way
- Attending bi-annual retreats with the men in jail/prison
- Attending periodic volunteer retreats and recognition celebrations
- Attending periodic training
- Meeting men exiting prison to provide companionship and transportation to place of housing and/or program
- Becoming a member of the post release team based on our SCPO Men's Program Release Plan

What do you need to do to become a volunteer mentor in the SCPO Men's Program?

In order to volunteer in the Men's Program, you need to:

- Receive and read the Men's Group Volunteer Mentor Manual
- Attend an orientation and sign the statement of orientation form*
- Fill out the volunteer questionnaire*
- Sign the confidentiality agreement
- If becoming a member of a prison group, attend a prison orientation session
- If becoming a member of a prison group, obtain an annual TB test

(NOTE: The items above ending with a "*" are included in the back of this volunteer manual)

All volunteer mentors will receive an orientation to the Men's Program by the Director / Assistant Director and/or designated staff and the lead mentors of the group. Orientation will include:

- An overview of Spiritus Christi Church history
- An overview of the Spiritus Christi Prison Outreach and Men's Program history, mission, and procedures
- An overview of the Men's Group Volunteer Manual
- A detailed review of anonymity, confidentiality and ethical conduct
- A review of policies and procedures regarding jail/prison, gifts, team approach and relationships with group members
- A review of the problem and dismissal procedure

At the completion of the orientation, the volunteer will sign a statement verifying the completion of the orientation, which will be kept in the volunteer's file.

Please make sure that you are familiar with both the staff and the volunteer policies listed below. This will give you an understanding of what we expect from group participants and the type of structure that we provide.

Men's Mentor Program Staff and Volunteer Mentor Policies

Our focus as a staff is to provide our group participants with a safe, loving place to begin their recovery. We are committed to the following policies to help guide our work.

- We will work as a team sharing information and struggles. Communication is key for the well being of our group participants.
- Volunteers or staff will not give money or gifts to group participants or former group participants.
- Volunteers or staff may not date group participants
- Volunteers or staff may not lend their vehicles, TV, cell phones or any equipment of any kind to group participants.
- One to one conversations after a group regarding anything shared in the group are not permitted.
- Discretion needs to be used when choosing to share personal information with group members.
- Do not give out your phone number or address
- Do not give any money to any group member
- Staff permission is needed to meet with a group member outside of group
- Do not keep anything a resident says or does from the staff
- Your personal belongings should not be left unattended
- Keep discussion of/with the group participants or what goes on in group confidential
- Be cognizant of appropriate boundaries
- Do not let group members borrow your personal possessions and belongings
- Report any observed or suspected abuse/neglect to SCPO staff who will take appropriate action; do not act on your own
- Report any use of any illegal substances to staff who will take appropriate action; do not act on your own
- Remember to be sensitive at all times to group members' backgrounds—especially when telling stories or jokes, using alcohol, discussing money or experiences that group participants may envy.

The following policies guide our work with women or men released from jail/prison who do not choose to come to the SCPO residences as well as and women or men who move on from the residences. This policy will apply when working with all women and men who have been released from jail/prison for a year or less:

- Work with the Director, Assistant Director or lead mentor when considering meeting with a man recently released from one of our prison/jail groups or having moved out of Nielsen House
- When working with the lead mentor, the lead mentor will bring the request to a regularly scheduled lead mentor meeting.
- When mentoring a former group member or former SCPO house resident, do so only in a public facility perhaps sharing coffee or a meal
- Always follow the SCPO protocol of 2x2 when meeting with recently released former citizens as follows:
 - New and inexperienced mentors need to follow this literally and visit with an ex-offender only when first working through the Assistant Director and/or the lead mentor of their group and then only when accompanied by an experienced mentor.
 - The experienced mentor who accompanies will communicate with the Assistant Director after each meeting to provide input on how it went.
 - Experienced mentors can meet with ex-offenders as appropriate and meet the 2x2 criteria by communicating before and after each meeting with the Assistant Director
- Maintain continuity of care by continuing discussions focused on the issues they were working on while in group which may include encouraging those who need it to stay in or get involved w/AA,NA, etc. and obtain a sponsor if they do not have one
- If appropriate, offering referral options for resources that specialize in helping them fill out employment applications, creating resumes, developing and enhancing life skills, etc.
- If a mentor wishes to offer the individual support and resources beyond the above (such as specific employment of educational opportunities), the mentor is strongly encouraged to bring their ideas and plans to their lead mentor so that they can express the ideas at the lead next possible lead mentor meeting and/or consult with the Assistant Director prior to offering the support and resources. This will provide the value of added input and hopefully insure the best possible outcome for the ex-offender following the philosophy of raising up the women and men we deal with as a village.
- Always use discretion and common sense when mentoring former Inmates

NOTE: Upholding Spiritus Christi Prison Outreach and the Men's Group policies and rules is essential for the unity and strength of the program.

Please feel free to ask for a meeting with staff at any time.

What happens if I have a problem while I'm volunteering in a Men's Mentor Program Group?

If a volunteer has a problem, it is the responsibility of the volunteer to notify the group lead mentor and to schedule a meeting. This meeting will take place within ten days of the volunteer's request. If after this meeting the volunteer feels that the problem has not been resolved, she/he may request a meeting with the Director or Assistant Director of Spiritus Christi Prison Outreach. This meeting will take place within ten days of the volunteer's request. The Director or Assistant Director will make the final decision on how to resolve the problem. Documentation of the problem and its resolution will be placed in the volunteer's file.

Volunteer Dismissal

Several acts of misconduct are considered as universally recognized as being very serious violations of accepted behavior that they may subject a volunteer to immediate dismissal.

The following acts are considered to be against the best interest of the Men's Mentor Program, its group participants, and our ministry:

- Violence or discourtesy toward group members, visitors, or other volunteers.
- Dangerous horseplay or the use of abusive language.
- Indecency or the making of obscene remarks.
- Use of alcohol or drugs while performing duties of volunteer work.
- Unauthorized or improper use of property belonging to the Men's Program, including unauthorized use of the telephone, email, or computer.
- Creating and/or contributing to unsanitary or unsafe conditions.
- Sexual harassment toward group members, volunteer staff, employees or guests, which include sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, or other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature.
- Use of poor judgment while performing volunteer duties resulting in placing group members, other volunteers or staff at serious risk.
- Failure to maintain professional and ethical relationship boundaries. Volunteers are not allowed to date group members.
- Disregard for established policies and procedures.
- Breach of confidential information, material, or the breaking of anonymity.
- Theft

Volunteer Statement of Orientation:

I have received a volunteer / internship orientation and understand my responsibilities. I further understand that my lead mentor or the Director and Assistant Director of Spiritus Christi Prison Outreach is available for questions or direction as needed.

Signature _____ Date _____
Lead Mentor/Director/Asst.Dir. _____ Date _____

Confidential files will be maintained for the Men's Program volunteers. Spiritus Christi Prison Outreach staff is responsible for ensuring safe, confidential records of volunteers.

The volunteer file will contain but is not limited to:

- Volunteer application(s)
- Interview notes and reference checks
- Signed, dated pledge of confidentiality
- Signed, dated statement of orientation
- Miscellaneous correspondence

Note: after a period of seven years, inactive volunteer records will be shredded.

Pledge of Confidentiality:

I, _____, understand that in the course of my association with the Spiritus Christi Prison Outreach Men's Mentor Program, I may learn certain facts about individuals being served by or associated with the Men's Mentor Program. These facts may be of a highly personal and confidential nature. Examples of such information are medical condition, finances, living arrangements, HIV status, criminal history, employment, sexual orientation, addiction history, relations with family members and the like. I understand that all such information must be treated as completely and strictly confidential.

I agree not to disclose any information of a personal and confidential nature to any person without the specific consent of the individual to whom such information pertains.

I realize and acknowledge that any violation of my pledge of confidentiality may lead to disciplinary action including suspension, dismissal.

Signature _____ Date _____

Volunteer Questionnaire

Mission: To respond to the Gospel call, to visit women and men in prison and journey with them as they reenter the community.

Name _____
Address _____
City _____ State _____ Zip Code _____
Social Security Number _____ Birthday _____
Home phone _____ Work phone _____
Best time to reach you: Day _____ Evening _____
Email address _____
Occupation _____
Skills _____

The following questions are meant to help you discern with us what your gifts and comfort level may be in working with men and women with a history of criminal conviction. Please feel free to write your answers or just verbally talk with us about them.

What draws you to volunteering in this ministry?

Volunteer Experience

Have you ever volunteered in Prison Ministry? (If yes, in what way?)

Have you ever had any experience with the criminal justice system?

What is your comfort level in spending time with people from diverse backgrounds?

How do you feel about spending time with people who have committed all types of crime?

Do you have any knowledge of Twelve - Step Programs?

Day and Hours available:

Please provide us with two references:

Reference

Reference
