

Volunteer Duties

Evening Volunteer Duties at the Sleep Center

Under the normal operating hours of the Sweet Home Sleep Center, the center opens in the evening and closes at 9am the following morning. Clients may check-in to the Sleep Center for the night between opening time and 10pm. Entry after 10pm requires prior approval and prenotification of the night Security Officer.

Hours:

Volunteers serve in shifts each evening at the Sleep Center during check-in time:

-Summer check-in hours are 6-10 p.m.

-Fall and Spring check-in hours (November and March) are 5-10 p.m.

-Winter check-in hours (Dec, Jan, Feb) are 4-10 p.m.

Other volunteers serve in the mornings, helping clients to leave on time, inspecting huts, and doing necessary cleaning and organizing.

Roles and Responsibilities:

Especially early in the evening, it is helpful to divide roles into gate volunteer and office volunteer. Some nights a shower volunteer is also needed. However, roles may change and overlap, and it is good for folks to work as a flexible team as the flow of people, the weather, and various issues change. Volunteers may change roles from one time to another and are encouraged to do so. We want as many folks “cross-trained” as possible.

Below is a description of the volunteer duties in these 3 categories:

Gate Volunteer Duties:

Check with the office to see if anyone has been trespassed and is therefore not allowed entry. The gatehouse is available to volunteers monitoring the gate. Mark people coming through the gate as present, write the time they arrived next to their name on the list. Make note of people who leave throughout your shift and if they return.

Check the previous night's list for available overflow space in the 8 bedroom for males and the 2 bed hut for women, which are provided on a first-come-first served basis. If no one was assigned a bed in the men's overflow space the night before, then another person can be assigned that bed. Otherwise, an overflow bed is given first to the occupant who stayed in a bed the night before. If that person is not at the gate at 6pm, then the bed can be given to someone else. Write the names of those in overflow as they are assigned a bed. The yellow tents are also provided on a first-come-first-serve basis and can be used for single women, single men or couples as needed.

It is OK to have clients wait until their space is assigned or a hut is ready, or you are sure there is space for them. They can wait either by the gate or in the meeting room but should not move around the center. A turn-over of space occurs at 6pm. When the gate opens at 5pm or 4pm, a person without an assigned space will have to wait until 6pm if all beds in the overflow space were full the night before. If at 6pm, the previous night's occupant has not arrived, then the turnover can occur.

There are often many people at the gate at opening time. If someone comes through that is not on the previous night's list, ask that person to step aside until you have finished with those waiting at the gate. If there is an open bed in the overflow, then the person waiting may be able to fill it. Ask those waiting if they have been clients previously and have therefore been registered. If yes, assign an open bed. If no, write their name on the list and then take them to the office for an intake interview.

If overflow beds are full, other clients can wait for an "overnighter" hut that is not going to be occupied on a given night by someone who would regularly be there. Those are usually assigned at 9:30, so someone told that an overflow bed is not available can always call or come back at that time.

If someone comes to the gate to visit a client of the sleep center, ask them to wait outside the gate while you check to see if the client is in. It is best not to tell the visitor whether or not the client is in until you get an OK from the client. The client can choose whether or not to greet the visitor outside the gate. Client visitors are not allowed entry into the sleep center.

During lulls in people entering, you may assist other volunteers in cleaning out huts, dealing with used bedding, etc. And don't hesitate to walk around and talk to clients. Just keep monitoring the gate. If the weather is bad, you can go into the office and keep an eye on the gate through the window.

Office Volunteer Duties:

Register new clients and go over the Sleep Center Rules with them. (Note whether or not they have a pet. A pet requires signature on the Pet Rules form.) Tell them what is available to them while they are staying at the center. Walk them to their sleeping space. If registrant is in need of a bin, set up a bin assignment. Monitor office window for requests. Check dinner calendar and meeting room for preparedness. If a dinner is scheduled, ask if help is needed serving. (There are some who bring dinner but do not stay to serve. In this case, help serve or assign someone to help serve. Use gloves.)

After 6pm, check with the Gate Volunteer to see if there are new people staying in the overflow bed or in a hut. If yes, then they will need fresh bedding. Check if there is used bedding in the space. If so, that bedding will need to be transferred to the service building. To do that, retrieve gloves from the office and move the bedding to the laundry room. Then get clean bedding from the laundry room for the person who will sleep on that space tonight. In summer, provide one sleeping bag, 2 blankets and a pillow. In winter, two sleeping bags, at least 2 blankets and a pillow may be needed, depending on conditions.

If a hut is available because someone has been out the past two nights, then at 6 pm, that hut will be turned over to 1) a woman who stayed the previous night in the women's overflow hut or 2) the longest continuous person in the men's overflow room. Check the past check-in sheets to figure out who can move into the open hut. Check the newly open hut for condition. With gloves on, take bedding in the hut to the laundry room. If there are any personal belongings in hut, transfer them to that person's bin. If space is available in their bin, empty contents of tub on porch in the bin as well. Move the bin to the front of the office building. Sweep hut. Notify the next person that they can move their bedding and bin to the hut. If they do not have a bin, assign them an available bin.

Other duties include keeping a list of needed office items, including items made available for clients, empty/fill dishwasher, wipe down tables in common room, restock bathroom and common room with supplies as needed, answer the phone, talk with people in the meeting room, etc. If someone calls the office asking for a client, ask them to hold while you check on whether the client would like to accept the call. Do not confirm the presence of a client directly to the caller. Record a message if unsure. If a community member brings a donation to the sleep center, ask them for contact information and record the donation in the donation folder on the Alliance desk. Note that clients are not allowed in the office without an appointment.

Shower Volunteer Duties:

Shower days are decided in advance. A third volunteer will cover supervising the showers when showers are available.

- Unlock the shower doors in the service building.
- Check showers for soap/shampoo/conditioner (extras may be under the sink in the hallway).
- Check stack of towels/washcloths in hallway (more can be found in the laundry room.)
- Clothes hamper in the hallway is for used towels.
- Check that the laundry room door is locked.
- Check for gloves.
- Check the previous night's shower list.
- Check spray bottle of bleach solution (1 TBSP bleach per quart water).

Go to meeting room with signup sheet for the showers and begin filling in names for showers in 15min time slots (10 minutes for shower and 5 minutes for undressing/dressing). Priority will be given to people who did not shower most recently. Spray the floor of shower between each person with bleach solution. After the last shower, spray down the entire shower and wipe the walls and floor dry (wear gloves). Lock the shower doors and return the list of shower takers to office so that the next volunteer can reference it if needed. Access to the bathrooms in the service building is until 10pm, so the service building door remains unlocked until then. While the showers are occupied, you may go around the center to remind people next on list that their turn is almost up.

A Word about Rule Enforcement:

All volunteers are responsible for rule enforcement as needed. If an argument starts among clients, it is best to head it off. Ask instigator(s) to back away or take a walk. If they refuse, then you may ask them to leave for the night on a trespass. If this is the case, fill out an Incident Report form. If safety is a concern at any time, call 911. For non-emergency police support, call the non-emergency dispatch number (509-527-1960).

Amendment for Extended Opening Hours

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the Sleep Center is open 24/7. The WWAH Exit Homelessness staff work on site between the hours of 8am and 6pm. Volunteer hours during this time remain from 6pm to 10pm. Since people are allowed to stay at the

Sleep Center throughout the day, check-in is not required. The gate to the Sleep Center remains closed at all times. Volunteers open the gate for people returning to the Sleep Center if they go out during the day. They are allowed to enter only if they are on the list from the previous night. If they are not on the list, then beginning at 6pm, give them a spot according to the Gate Volunteer Duties instructions above. Note that during the pandemic, the men's overflow space is limited to 4-6 beds. Also, there are no "overnighter" loans of unoccupied huts for a night. Before 10pm, a volunteer takes attendance in the Sleep Center for the night. This may require a walk around the Sleep Center to confirm and place a check mark by the name of all people staying at the Sleep Center. This attendance list is transferred to an Excel spreadsheet on the office computer and printed out for 1) the night Security Officer at 10pm and 2) the morning Exit staff. Attendance data is also distributed by email to the Executive Director, Sleep Center Manager and a few other WWAH Board members. Because of the tight space in the common room, people are only allowed to enter for access to the bathroom, sink, coffee table, cellphone lockers, and pass-through window. No loitering in the common room is allowed and social distancing is expected. Entrance to the building requires wearing a face covering. Lunch and dinner are served through the passthrough window. For the winter, 2 yellow warming tents with propane heaters are set up outside for people to warm up. Please check with the office for rules concerning the warming tents. The office is often busy, and it helps to have two people to assist. Among the tasks are cleaning and sanitizing the common room, answering the gate, serving people through the pass-through window with food or other items, supplying the bathroom and common room with supplies as needed (soap, paper towels, toilet paper), answering the phone, etc. Please see a list on the bulletin board in the office for suggestions of chores that can be done.