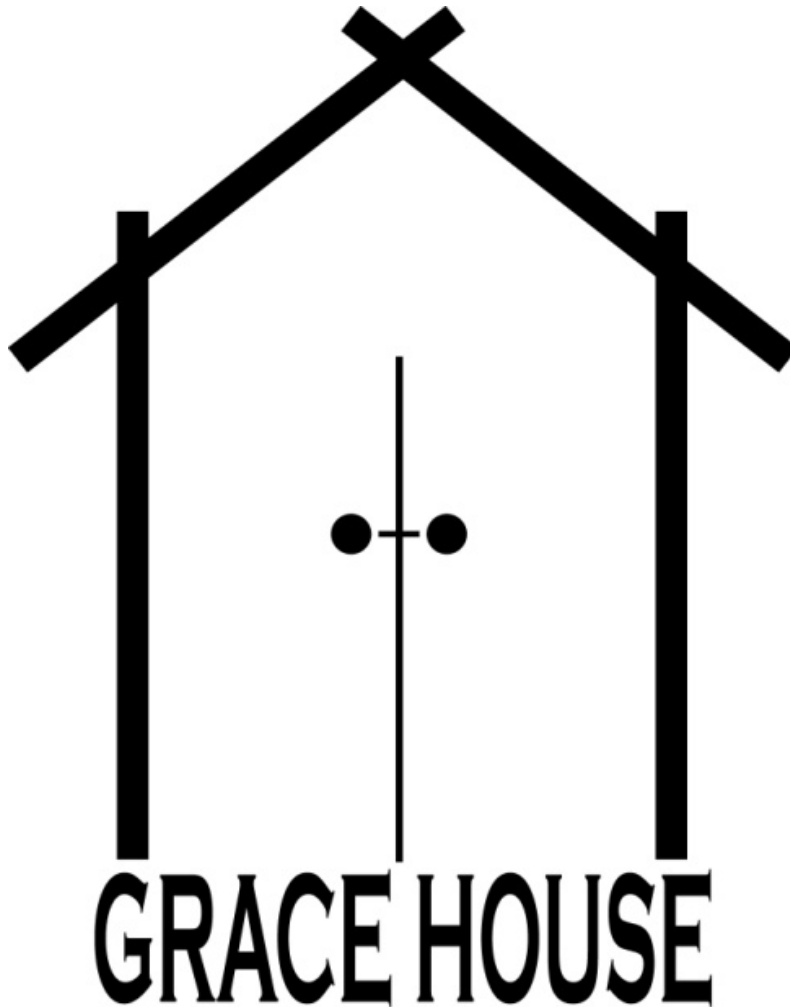


Volunteer Handbook

GRACE HOUSE



501 SW 1st Ave
Grand Rapids, MN 55744
Tel # 326-2790

Dear Volunteer:

This Handbook has been prepared to inform you about the GRACE House shelter's history, philosophy, practices, and policies. Although no handbook can answer every question, we have attempted to cover the major points of volunteering at GRACE House. We ask that you read the Handbook carefully and refer to it whenever questions arise. Please always feel free to call (326-2790) or stop in at GRACE House to get further clarification or to share your questions or concerns with staff or the Executive Director.

GRACE House utilizes the support of volunteers in all aspects of its program and services. Volunteers are an integral part of providing adequate services for the guests of GRACE House including direct care, fund raising, and community support. Shift volunteers provide coverage during the morning, evening and overnight shifts. Hiring staff to cover these shifts would be financially prohibitive; we couldn't afford to do it; we would have to close our doors or drastically cut services. GRACE House is example of a community program that could not exist without volunteers.

In addition to the monetary value of our volunteers, there is another, less tangible benefit: you are demonstrating to our guests that there are people in our community who really care about other people and are willing to donate their precious time and energy to providing housing, companionship and compassion to those going through difficult times. We have heard many comments from guests who are amazed at the fact that people from the community are willing to give up their time to be here for them! Many people who pass through our doors have never before experienced this type of unconditional kindness and caring from strangers. We know you are all busy people and have many other things you could be doing, but you have chosen to volunteer here, working with people struggling through some really tough times. Please know that the Director, staff, Board, and especially the guests really appreciate your presence!

We hope this handbook will allow you to feel comfortable with GRACE House. Again, please don't hesitate to ask questions; we will gladly answer them. We also welcome your ideas for ways to improve our service. Feel welcome to stop in any time or call us at 326-2790. We believe you will enjoy your volunteer work here and get to know and appreciate your fellow volunteers. You will also get to know and appreciate the guests, people who are experiencing homelessness, but who are working towards a better life. We hope you will find GRACE House a rewarding place to volunteer.

On behalf of our staff, guests, and Board, thank you in advance for the time and energy you are about to give to GRACE House and your community. We look forward to getting to know and work with you.

Welcome to GRACE House

GRACE House is a project founded by Action through Churches Together. (ACT) This was a group of representatives from various churches in the Grand Rapids area who met over the years to work on specific projects that would be of benefit to the people of this area. The group determined that one of the unmet needs in our county was a homeless shelter, a place for people who were temporarily without housing to receive shelter and services.

GRACE House became a “dream in the making” by this grassroots group of individuals who witnessed a need for a safe place for people who are experiencing homelessness. ACT formed a committee to begin to help understand and address the problems facing homeless people in our community. The vision and mission of GRACE House was formed, committees worked separately and together to move towards the founding of GRACE House.

GRACE House was created by this group of concerned citizens. It is a special place that provides care, concern and assistance to homeless individuals and families in Itasca County. We provide a safe environment and supportive services for the people we serve.

GRACE House opened its doors on 5/21/06; we were initially housed at Zion Lutheran Church in Grand Rapids; on 12/26/11 we moved to our new home at 501 1st Avenue SW. The location at Zion was initially planned to be quite temporary, only a year or two at the most. Due to difficulty finding an appropriate space, adequate funding, etc. the stay at Zion lengthened to over five years. We will always be very grateful and appreciative to Zion Lutheran Church for their patience and kindness to us over the years. They truly lived the gospel message of “shelter the homeless”.

GRACE House has a Board of Directors and is an independent 501©3 non-profit organization. Donations to GRACE House are tax-deductible.

Vision:

To provide safe, sanitary, secure housing for all people in Itasca County needing temporary shelter.

Mission:

Give hospitality
Rest and renewal
Access to appropriate resources
Compassion
Empowerment in the future
for those needing temporary shelter

Values:

GRACE House values and beliefs are guidelines for role modeling positive behavior and working relationships as a team with our staff, our volunteers, and our communities.

Stewardship:

GRACE House is accountable for the success of the shelter as a whole. GRACE House conducts its business in a fiscally and ethically responsible manner.

Respect:

GRACE House treats all people with dignity, valuing individual and cultural differences.

Integrity:

In the spirit of mutual trust, GRACE House is open, honest and ethical in our actions.

Innovation:

GRACE House advocates for all people served through guiding principles rooted in our vision and mission.

Excellence:

GRACE House believes and strives for best practices in shelter care.

GRACE House Philosophy:

The philosophy of GRACE House combines numerous ideals in an effort to further support our mission and values. Those ideals include:

- (1) A commitment to confidentiality,
- (2) A commitment to the guests served,
- (3) A responsibility to treat all people with dignity, respect, and with ethical standards,
- (4) A commitment to GRACE House, and
- (5) A commitment to professional competency.

Purpose and Function Statements:

GRACE House is a short-term shelter serving homeless and transient individuals and families. For the purpose of these policies and procedures, “homeless” means an individual or family that lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence.

GRACE House recognizes that many people may end up homeless as a result of situations that can be related but are not limited to: fire, poverty, inability to secure affordable housing, inability to secure a living wage, and lack of skills and/or resources.

GRACE House is a program designed to provide meals, immediate shelter, safety, as well as referrals to and networking for resources for guests served.

GRACE House is a private non-profit program licensed by the Department of Health.

GRACE House does assist the various guests served by offering, with written permission, the ability to network and make referrals for services. Continuing education is offered to staff and volunteers.

GRACE House believes in involving the guests we serve in the process of helping themselves to lead independent and self-sufficient lives.

GRACE House believes in the rights of all people to live and make choices that bring them optimum happiness, good health, and wellness while honoring their rights and responsibilities for their actions.

GRACE House believes that family systems are of great importance to the success of the community-focused program. Guests are invited and encouraged to participate in working with our staff and volunteers on their individual goals towards a safe and secure life.

Volunteer Responsibilities

Each volunteer position has certain specific responsibilities. But, all volunteers should conduct themselves in a mature, professional manner. We must respect the dignity of each guest and support the GRACE House philosophy and mission.

Shift volunteers responsibilities include the following:

Morning Shift: 6 a.m. – 8 a.m. Volunteers relieve the overnight volunteers. They will share information with you, including number of guests, any special needs for the morning, and any significant problems from the previous night. Guests can sleep until 7 a.m. on weekdays, 9 a.m. on weekends and holidays. Breakfast table should be set up downstairs; when there are two morning volunteers, one can supervise upstairs and one downstairs. When there is only one volunteer, set up breakfast table and send guests down when ready. Staff should arrive by 7:30.

Evening Shift: 4:45 p.m. – 9 p.m. Volunteers will work with staff person and follow their directions. They may prepare a meal or go pick meals up from a local business, community café, etc. They will help with clean-up after the meal. They will interact with guests as needed; they may visit, play games, watch a movie, etc. When there are families with children, volunteers may assist parent with child care and supervision.

Overnight Shift: 9 p.m. – 6 a.m. Volunteers will visit, play games or watch movies with guests until 10 p.m. (midnight on Friday and Saturday nights) and then they must enforce lights out and TV off policy. Staff will give medications before 9 p.m. Volunteers will not be expected to do so. Volunteers may sleep during the night, using either a bed or a cot, but must be able and available to wake up if needs arise during the night. If sleeping on a bed, please use a sheet from the linen storage room to cover the bedding. You may use a quilt and a pillow and pillowcase from the storage room or, if possible, bring your own from home (a sleeping bag also works well). In the morning put your sheet and pillow case in the laundry basket and return quilt and pillow to storage area.

Volunteers are responsible to insure the safety and well-being of the guests, monitoring interactions and providing a comfortable, safe haven for them. Volunteers will be responsible to maintain the rules of GRACE House and interact with guests in a positive manner to enforce these rules. Volunteers will also be responsible for handling any emergency situations that may arise as outlined in the Emergency Procedures located in the Volunteer Manual. Emergency numbers are posted in staff/volunteer area. First Aid Kit is located in kitchen and staff/volunteer area upstairs.

If you have any questions, concerns, or if you have ideas for how our services can be improved, contact the GRACE House site staff or the Director or use the suggestion box.

Volunteering: Policies and Procedures

When you are a new volunteer at GRACE House, you may feel a little strange in your new surroundings. This is a normal feeling and is expected. Your fellow volunteers and the GRACE House staff want to help you get off to a good start. Feel free to ask them for help or for clarification if there is something you don't understand. Occasionally, slight changes are made in the policies/procedures at GRACE House. You will be advised by staff or through e-mail of any changes. Changes will also be kept in the Volunteer Manual, which will be located in the staff/volunteer work area.

Application/Training: Volunteers must complete a Volunteer Application and attend orientation and on-going training as requested by the Director. A criminal background check will be done on each volunteer at no cost to the volunteer.

Attendance: Sign-in sheets are necessary for our program in order for us to keep an accurate record of your contribution to GRACE House. We ask that you sign in and out each time you volunteer. It is very important to be punctual when you arrive for your shift; ten minutes early is recommended to give an opportunity to exchange information with volunteers from the previous shift and staff as well as to get a chance to meet guests.

If you are unable to cover your shift, please call the office at 326-2790 as soon as you know you will need a substitute.

Boundaries and Limitations: Please maintain proper boundaries with guests; being kind and compassionate is important. Becoming too friendly or intrusive can lead to serious problems. The primary focus on one's work at GRACE House must be service to the guests, not fulfillment of personal needs. If personal issues arise in your life that may cause difficulty in fulfilling your responsibilities, it may be best to take a break from volunteering.

Confidentiality: Confidentiality is critical when working with people in vulnerable situations. Whatever is shared with you at GRACE House must remain at GRACE House. Please read and sign the Confidentiality Policy.

Conflict Resolution: Should you have a difficulty with another volunteer or staff member, contact the GRACE House Program Director or Executive Director. A meeting will be arranged to hear the concerns and a plan devised to resolve the conflict. If your concern is with the Executive Director or you do not feel the conflict has been resolved, you may contact the GRACE House Board Chairperson.

Drugs and Alcohol: GRACE House is a substance-free environment. Please report any suspected use/abuse to site staff or Director.

Equal Volunteering Opportunity: GRACE House provides equal volunteering opportunity for everyone regardless of age, sex, color, race, creed, national origin, religious persuasion, marital status, sexual orientation, political belief, or disability that does not prohibit performance of essential job functions. All matters relating to volunteering are based upon ability to perform the job as well as dependability and reliability.

Gifts, Tips, Soliciting: Do not accept any tips or gifts from guests, their families, or friends. We do not want to create an atmosphere where our guests feel obligated to reward GRACE House staff and volunteers for doing a job. Also, you may not promote or solicit your own business enterprise, political agenda, or religious beliefs while volunteering with us. Solicitation for a private charity is also prohibited.

Guest Interactions: It is the policy at GRACE House that volunteers do not lend guests money, transport guests, or give gifts to the guests. If you choose to do so, GRACE House accepts no responsibility/liability for these actions.

Harassment: Sexual harassment or harassing conduct will not be tolerated at GRACE House. If you feel you have been harassed, or if you observe harassment of a guest, report your concerns immediately to the GRACE House Director.

Incident Reports: Volunteers will be required to document any unusual incidents that may occur on a shift on the Incident Report. Copies are located in the Volunteer Handbook Manual. (Examples of incidents that need reporting include: volunteer or guest injury, medical emergency, serious disagreements or conflicts, law enforcement involvement, and any other unusual situations.) If a serious situation arises when staff is not present, you may call the Executive Director or Program Director at home for support and consultation. Never hesitate to call 911 in an emergency situation.

Parking: GRACE House does not assume any liability for loss or damages your car may sustain while parked in our lot.

Meetings: Volunteers may be required to attend meetings on occasion as determined by the Executive Director to discuss changes in policies, overall functioning of GRACE House and/or other topics of significance. There will be occasional Volunteer Support meetings that will be opportunities to discuss situations and brainstorm solutions with other volunteers. These meetings are optional, but a good opportunity to share concerns and ideas for improving services.

Smoking: Smoking is not permitted in GRACE House. Guests and volunteers may smoke in the designated outside area only.

Meals: Volunteers are invited and encouraged to eat meals with the guests.

Feelings that may be experienced by people who are homeless:

Anxiety: This is the most common feeling. Any substantial threat produces anxiety. Normal amounts of anxiety help one mobilize against threats in ways that are appropriate and healthy. Great or on-going anxiety, however, may produce confusion, distorted perception, poor judgment, and self-defeating behaviors.

Helplessness: People work hard to manage successfully and develop coping skills. To have the roof fall in as the result of an external disaster or a series of events may produce feelings of helplessness.

Shame: People are taught to be competent and self-reliant but during a crisis one can feel incompetent and may have to depend on others. This can produce feelings of shame.

Anger: This may be directed at others, the event, the support people, or turned inward on the person.

Ambivalence: A person in crisis feels ambivalent because of struggling with independence vs. dependence, self-reliance vs. reliance upon others, controlling emotions vs. losing control, and increasing self-confidence by managing by him/her vs. increasing vulnerability by reaching out to another for help.

Low Self-esteem: All of the above feelings can produce a decrease in self-esteem and leave the individual feeling extremely vulnerable. It is this decreased self-esteem and great vulnerability that make a crisis both a danger and an opportunity.

Clients in crisis may act on their feelings and how they think one ought to behave to accomplish something. This is why some clients act angry, demanding, and manipulative; these are feelings and actions which defend against their real feelings of anxiety, helplessness, shame and incompetence. Although the behavior is an attempt to regain control, it usually fails to obtain the necessary help or to restore control.

Caution for caretakers!!! Most of us at this point will have a pretty good idea of what we think the guest could or should do to resolve this situation. Although there are exceptions, it is very important to allow him/her to make the decisions about how to proceed. Offer suggestions about what you think the guest's resources are if you need to, but ask them to decide. Our purpose is to **EMPOWER**.

Communication

How NOT to communicate with GRACE House Guests: (Or children, neighbors, students, friends, co-workers, etc.)

In talking with guests at GRACE House, it's important to avoid certain types of responses that block communication and put the guests in powerless positions. Examples of ineffective responses include the following:

- 1. Ordering, warning or threatening** – *“You have got to join the group”* or *“If you don't do it, you'll be sorry.”* This can produce fear, defensiveness, or resistance in guests and leave them feeling rejected and/or humiliated.
- 2. Preaching, moralizing** – *“Look on the bright side,”* or *“There's a reason why you're going through this pain.”* This can create guilt, resistance, and low self-esteem.
- 3. Reasoning, arguing, or persuading** – *“You're wrong because....”* Or *“You'd feel a lot better if you would only...”* Responses like this may produce helplessness and defensiveness and set up a win/lose situation.
- 4. Providing answers or solutions** – *“The best thing would be for you to...”* This takes away power from guests and it can foster feelings of inferiority or resistance.
- 5. Blaming or criticizing** – *“I think.....is your fault,”* or *“You're too trusting.”* Responses like this communicate a lack of respect and may engender feelings of inferiority and resistance or withdrawal in guests.
- 6. Sarcasm or teasing** – *“So you think the world's going to end if....”* Responses like this can hurt and humiliate clients, resulting in anger, resistance or withdrawal.
- 7. Avoiding or digressing** – *“That reminds me of ...”* This can communicate disinterest, leaving guests feeling ignored and/or rejected.
- 8. Labeling** – *“It sounds like you're co-dependent.”* This can make guests feel like they are being seen as problem types rather than individuals; it can produce feelings of inferiority, resistance, and anger.

COMMUNICATION (continued)

There are other types of responses that must also be used with caution: They may block communication if they are not used carefully. Responses that have potential to be ineffective include the following:

- 1. Interpreting** – *“What you mean to say is...”* Responses like this imply that you know guests better than they know themselves. These responses can produce feelings of confusion, inferiority and frustration at not being understood. Stated differently *“do you mean...?”* can help clarify communication.
- 2. Questioning** – *“Why did you do that?”* Questions, especially if asked in a series, may come off as interrogation that produces defensiveness and distrust in others. Certainly, it is appropriate to ask some questions; to be most effective questions should be open-ended (how or what questions...those not answerable by “yes” or “no”.)
- 3. Praising** - *“I think you must be a wonderful mom.”* Praise coming from someone who barely knows you can sound very insincere and may have the opposite of the intended effect; this is especially likely when dealing with someone whose self-concept is low. On the other hand, it can be very helpful and effective to point out strengths you do notice in guests (*“I know it was scary for you to come here; I’m glad you had the courage to do it.”*)
- 4. Reassuring** – *“Things probably aren’t as bad as you think.”* Or *“You’ll get through this.”* This kind of response may have the opposite of the intended effect. Guests may feel worse if they feel that their situations are being minimized.

Tips for Helping Children and their Parents

Experiencing homelessness is especially traumatic for children; their lives have been uprooted and they don't understand what has happened. They will require additional attention and lots of patience. Obviously, this is a time that is extremely difficult for their parents. When talking to parents who need help and support, remember these points:

1. Let parents know **THEY ARE NOT ALONE**. Parents need to hear other's input, ideas and support. You can say things like, "I've heard many parents talk about that struggle" or "I know what you're talking about, my two-year old acted the same way." With these kinds of statements, parents know that others have had the same struggles.
2. Reassure parents that their child's behavior is normal. For example it is normal for two-year olds to say "no" all the time, for three-year-olds to whine a lot and for five-year-olds not to want to go to sleep or wash their hands before eating. Be as informed as you can about child development issues. Your priority is to immediately reassure the parent.
3. Share ideas with the parent about positive reinforcement. Remember, rewards do not have to be objects; they can be hugs, smiles, loving words. Here are some tips for when and how to reinforce **POSITIVE** behavior:
 - Immediate reinforcement is most effective.
 - To get it going, reward every time. To keep it going, reward periodically.
 - Reward improvement.
 - Watch and be careful not to occasionally reward negative behavior.
4. Help parents talk about their children in a positive way. Suggest positive adjectives to describe their children (helpful, sensitive, lighthearted, serious, curious, energetic, loving, etc.). Also notice what parents are doing right and congratulate them.
5. Talk to the parent about stress management for themselves. Parents need to hear about self-care skills (sleeping, eating, and supportive resources). Parents need to take some time for themselves and need adult conversation. Encourage them to take that time and help them plan how they will be able to do that.

GRACE House Hospitality Code

- 1. It's nice to hear your name**, so learn the names of our guests, too.
- 2. Labeling people creates invisible barriers**; remember that guests are guests, not “the homeless”. Labeling – whether spoken or printed on a posted sign – creates divisions and can foster an “us” and “them” syndrome.
- 3. Personal questions can be tough to answer**; don't put guests in awkward positions by asking personal questions. If guests need to talk, give them the chance, but don't pry.
- 4. We all like to keep some things to ourselves**; all information about guests is confidential. Don't discuss guests' situations with other people.
- 5. Everyone can use a little privacy**; our shelter is a temporary home for our guests. Knock before entering a guest's room.
- 6. Sometimes we need to spend time alone**; respect guests' needs for quiet time alone or with family.
- 7. We all have bad days**; depression, sadness and hopelessness may come. Allow guests the space to deal with their emotions. Be prepared to forgive outbursts without judging guests ungrateful.
- 8. We understand and care for our children**; allow guests to do the same. Avoid contradicting guests' instructions to their children. Always ask parent' permission before giving things to children.
- 9. Parents need a break**; offer to tutor, play with, and plan activities for interested children while their parents take a break.
- 10. Adult guests should be treated like adults**; although our guests are in situations that may make them temporarily dependent on others, remember that they are adults who are capable of making their own decisions.

GRACE House Rules

- 1. NO alcohol or drugs are allowed on the premises. No alcohol or non-prescription drug use is allowed at any time during a guest's stay.**
- 2. Guests must maintain good personal hygiene at all time, also must be wearing proper and modest clothing. Guests may be asked to change at the discretion of staff.**
- 3. Guests will advise director/supervisor of any medications in their possession and will follow GRACE House procedures for administration/storage of medication.**
- 4. No smoking in the facility. Smoking in designated outdoor area ONLY.**
- 5. Guests are required to check in with Director or supervisor every morning in regards to what their plans are for the day.**
- 6. Guests must be in GRACE House by 8 p.m. unless they have a pass.**
- 7. When guests leave the building they should not wander around the neighborhood. They should go up the hill to Pokegama Avenue and then to their destination.**
- 8. Visitors are allowed at GRACE House with staff permission only. Visitors are not allowed in guest rooms. Visitors must leave by 8:00 p.m.**
- 9. Monday through Friday: Guests must be up by 7:00am with beds made and curtains open by 8:00am. Saturday and Sunday: Up at 9:00am with beds made and curtains open by 10:00am.**
- 10. Monday through Friday: Showers must be done by 7:30am and not used again until after supper time when staff says it's ok. Saturday and Sunday: Showers done by 10am and not used again until after supper time when staff says it's ok.**
- 11. Sunday night through Thursday night: All TV off at 10pm, no exceptions. Friday and Saturday night: TV off in living area at 10pm, guests may watch TV in lower level with volunteer until midnight.**
- 12. Guests will store personal belongings in room and will keep their room and GRACE House areas clean and tidy. No food or beverages, other than water, allowed in rooms.**
- 13. Computers may be used by guests. Employment and housing purposes only during the day. Limited time in evenings may be spent on the computer for other appropriate uses.**
- 14. There will be no threatening or abusive behavior or language permitted.**

- 15. Swearing and/or off color jokes are not acceptable. Movies, DVDs and computer games must be rated PG or PG 13.**
- 16. Guests must follow the directions of GRACE House staff and volunteers. If there is a problem, guests may discuss it with Director for clarification.**
- 17. Television and overhead lights will be turned off at 10 p.m. Last cigarette break will be at 9:45 p.m. with no going outside after 10:00 p.m.**
- 18. All cell phones/electronics shall be put on silent at 10:00 p.m. (if you absolutely must make a phone call after that time, please keep your voice quiet in respect for those trying to sleep).**
- 19. No sexual activity is allowed at GRACE House**
- 20. Guests are not allowed downstairs or in kitchen without staff or volunteer.**
- 21. Guests are not allowed in other guest's rooms.**
- 22. Guests are not allowed to spend time in their rooms during the day.**
- 23. Please have at least socks on your feet at all times. No bare feet. Shoes must be worn downstairs.**
- 24. Guests may wash 1 load of laundry per week. Guest must sign in on "Laundry Sign In" sheet when doing laundry. Also please wash your own bedding once a week.**
- 25. Meals are served as follows:**
 - a. Breakfast from 7:00 a.m. until 8:00 a.m. (8am-9am weekends and holidays)**
 - b. Lunch at 12:00 p.m. (Noon)**
 - c. Dinner/Supper from 5:30 p.m. until 6:30 p.m. (approximately)**
- 26. Tuesday and Thursday night is community café, guest may choose to take the bus or drive themselves. We need to know by 4:15pm which option guest will be choosing. Guest must eat the meal there, no bringing the meal back here to eat.**
- 27. Guests must let us know half hour prior if they are planning on being here for the meal, otherwise staff/volunteers may not have prepared enough food.**
- 28. Parents are responsible for children at all times. Parents are not allowed to leave children unattended or with other guests.**
- 29. Guests are asked to take part in daily chores as assigned by staff.**
- 30. Be respectful of staff, volunteers, fellow guests, and all GRACE House property.**
- 31. Intentional damage to property or damage resulting from carelessness will result in designated volunteer hours or a fee/payment of a designated amount.**

Community Service Information

- 1.** All Community Services applicants must meet with Becky or Ami for an interview prior to attending volunteer training.
- 2.** In order for time to count for C.S., paperwork must be received from probation officer.
- 3.** C.S. workers are not to work overnight shifts.
- 4.** Only one C.S. worker per shift.
- 5.** C.S. workers are not to have the GRACE House keys.
- 6.** When signing up for shifts, please put C.S. after name.
- 7.** Time sheets must be signed by staff at the beginning of shift and at the end of shift in order for hours to count.
- 8.** C.S. worker must keep track of their own sheet and it is their responsibility to turn it in to Ami (Program Director) to track hours.