



DASH

Volunteer Handbook

Thank you for your support – you make our work possible.

Thank you for choosing to be a part of the DASH volunteer team!

We are so thankful for your time and energy especially as we continue to provide services and support survivors in our new virtual world. Many of our programs are solely possible because of the work of our volunteer team, including our tutoring program, Art Group and all of our skills-based volunteers working behind the scenes. We love our volunteers.

Updated: September 2020





About DASH

The District Alliance for Safe Housing (DASH) was founded in 2006 to provide relief to survivors of domestic and sexual violence, through emergency and long-term safe housing, and innovative homelessness prevention services. In less than four years, we have helped to transform how safe housing is operated and accessed throughout the District, and we have grown to become the city's largest dedicated housing provider for victims of violence and their children.

DASH works to create a culture where safe housing is a right shared by everyone. No one should have to choose between living with abuse and being homeless.

Follow us on [Facebook](#) (@DistrictAllianceforSafeHousing), [Twitter](#) (@dashdc), and [Instagram](#) (@dash_dc)!

Contact info

This manual serves as an introduction to DASH policies and practices as well as information about volunteering with us. If you have any further questions please contact Jessy Murgel:

Jessy Murgel

jmurgel@dashdc.org

202-462-3274 ext. 227

DASH Programs: Home, Means, Safety

Home

The first tier of our strategy is to create more safe housing for survivors. Through our own housing development projects, DASH has created a continuum of new, safe housing – from emergency to transitional to permanent, affordable housing – available to all victims of domestic violence, regardless of their circumstances, including those with chemical dependence, mental illness, or other disabilities which might otherwise prevent them from gaining access to safe housing.

- DASH'S **Cornerstone Program** is our site-based emergency-to-transitional housing program and now the District's largest dedicated safe housing program for survivors. Here, we provide 43 units of safe housing where residents and their families may come in a crisis and live for up to 2 years while working to recover from abuse.
- The **Empowerment Project** is DASH's scattered-site, transitional-to-permanent housing program where we provide 20 families with the opportunity to sign a lease on an apartment unit of their choosing and a rental subsidy for two years, after which participants assume paying the rent and remain in their units permanently.
- The **Right to Dream** is DASH's newest program and is our scattered-site safe housing program for transitioning youth (aged 18-24 years old) who are survivors of domestic and/or sexual violence and experiencing housing instability or homelessness. Through Right to Dream, 20 transitioning youth survivors will receive wraparound supports and housing assistance for up to two years.

All of DASH's housing programs employ a trauma-informed approach provided in a confidential setting. This means that we work with victims on an individualized basis – we don't screen out potential residents, require participation in programs as a condition of their residency, or mandate goals for families living in our housing. DASH Advocates work intensively to build trusting relationships with our program participants, gaining an understanding of their specific circumstances and needs, and offering support and services to them consistently, so that victims choose to engage with staff in programming on their own terms. This approach has proven to yield stronger outcomes than traditional service model.

Means

The second tier of our strategy is to prevent homelessness for victims escaping domestic violence. Through our **Survivor Resilience Fund**, DASH provides emergency financial assistance to help survivors address needs which might threaten their permanent housing, help them achieve safety, and gain the support they need to move forward with their lives.

This might include expenses such as:

- Safety devices, lock changes, security bars, and cameras;
- Application fees, moving costs, and costs to set up new households after moving into safe housing; Medical, legal, and professional fees to remediate the effects of the violence;
- Expenses to repair or replace damaged property;
- Transportation costs, such as gas money, car repairs, driver's license or inspection fees, and gas money to get to court, medical and counseling appointments; and,
- Supplies for school, professional disciplines, and schooling.

In addition to determining what financial support is needed, DASH staff will go over a safety and wellness plan with survivors to help equip them to remain safe while in the community. Providing survivors with financial support such as this can mean the difference between housing stability and life on the streets.

Safety

The third and final tier of our strategy is to facilitate access for survivors to a range of housing options to ensure that these families find safety. Through our **Housing Resource Center (HRC)** we provide one-on-one housing counseling to help survivors obtain and maintain safe housing; conduct housing clinics for survivors to understand and employ their housing options and rights; and deliver training and technical assistance for housing providers to improve their response to victims. We help place families in emergency shelter, transitional housing, and permanent, affordable housing throughout the city. DASH has relationships with more than 200 private landlords and property managers in the District, as well as the DC Housing Authority, to enable victims to remain in safe, affordable housing rather than enter the shelter system. Additionally, DASH is engaged in public policy and training to increase survivors' access to safe, stable housing throughout the housing system and encourage housing providers to be more sensitive to survivors' needs. All of our work through HRC is designed to allow families to get and keep housing in the community as safely as possible.

Our Impact: By the Numbers

In 2019:

We connected **2,162 adults and children** to safe housing, advocacy, and resources to live safely away from the threat of violence and over **75% of whom we safely housed** in Cornerstone transitioned into safe and stable homes.

Our community housing staff conducted **44 weekly walk-in clinics** and provided **61 grants for emergency financial assistance** to survivors.

They also assisted survivors in **completing housing applications, obtaining safety transfers, navigating the public housing system, and making connections to community services.**

In addition, our staff supported **1,858 calls from survivors** seeking safe housing resources and services.

DASH also welcomed **37 new volunteers** in 2019!



Voluntary Services, Trauma Informed Care and Low Barrier Entry

Voluntary Services

A voluntary services model is based on the philosophy that participants of supportive housing have a right to safe, affordable housing with the same rights and obligations as any other leaseholder. Participation in programming is not and services are designed to help participants maintain housing stability and maximize their independence.

When thinking about Voluntary Services:

- Relationships are everything!
- Attendance at classes and groups may decrease
- Some participants may not need or have time for additional supportive services
- Program may need to redefine program outcomes and meaning of success
- Some participants still may not “be successful”

Trauma Informed Care

A trauma-informed approach reflects adherence to six key principles rather than a prescribed set of practices or procedures.

1. Safety
2. Trustworthiness and Transparency
3. Peer support
4. Collaboration and mutuality
5. Empowerment, voice and choice
6. Cultural, Historical, and Gender Issues

Definition: “too much, too fast, too soon” in such a way that one’s normal ability to cope is overwhelmed, leaving one feeling powerless, out of control and/or disconnected from one’s self, family, community and beliefs.

Trauma can occur in two ways:

a) Direct exposure: It happens to you. (e.g. you are assaulted)

b) Secondary Exposure: The trauma happens to someone else, but you experience the impact by watching/hearing how it affects the other person. *Volunteers working with residents may experience secondary trauma. Self-care is especially important - don't over extend yourself and ask for support.*

Do's and Don'ts of Trauma Informed Care

<u>Do</u>	<u>Don't</u>
Listen	Ask why they don't leave
Be non-judgmental	Judge the victim or their batterer
Believe	Ask rapid questions or details they are not comfortable sharing
Provide information about choices	Blame or shame
Be aware of your own body language, voice, etc.	
Help decisions when asked	
Acknowledge/comment on their strengths	

Low Barrier Entry

The DASH program is a low barrier service, meaning that we accept clients regardless of substance abuse, children, or their relationship with their abuser; we accept them where they are at. At DASH we believe that all survivors and their families no matter what their situation, should have access to, and be welcomed into, safe housing and a wide variety of services that allows them to rebuild their lives on their own terms.

DASH Children's Program

How DASH Programming Works to Address Exposure to Trauma:

Support and Education for Parents:

Parents/Guardians are crucial to a child's recovery from trauma. DASH offers parenting education, individual support and therapeutic interventions to families, and an array of activities parents can do with children to promote health and recovery.

Modifying adult-to-child ratios and group sizes

Individual attention provided to children who have experienced trauma is very important. DASH promotes situations that allow children to work with a volunteer one-on-one when possible or in smaller groups. Increasing the ratio of adults to children allows individual conversations, supports a child during difficult emotional times—especially during outbursts—and provides more choices tailored to children's needs and interests.



Minimizing daily transitions and emphasizing predictability

Children who have been exposed to violence may show unruly behavior and have short attention spans. They need safe choices, safety, and stability in their environments, schedules and rules. We make expectations, and boundaries are clear so children feel protected and safe.

Facilitating children's experiences with success and expression

Children do not have as many ways to express inner feelings, and may particularly have difficulty using words to express their emotions. Their experience with trauma may make them feel out of control and more insecure about their ability to succeed. At DASH we provide many different types of experiences for children to express their feelings and to be proud of their skills including art, play, yoga, group therapy, puppy play, movie nights, community service, tutoring, and field trips.

Volunteer Menu

Individual Opportunities

The success of DASH programs would not be possible without the dedication and passion of volunteers! At DASH, you play a vital role in supporting survivors of domestic violence and their families in safe housing especially during the pandemic, while we have put a pause on in-person volunteering and shift to operate virtually.

- 1. Tutoring***- Work one-on-one with a child or adult seeking tutoring at DASH! Tutors help with language support, GED practice, and after school homework. We are not looking for experts, just enthusiastic, committed individuals. All tutors must be able to commit to the full September- May tutoring season.
- 2. Social Media/Communications Support** - DASH is looking for volunteers with expertise in communications and marketing to support branded content for DASH communications such as email campaigns and local media opportunities. Design expertise in web design using WordPress, creating social media designs and ads is welcomed!
- 3. Host a Drive** - Engage your networks to learn more about DASH and participate in a donation drive for DASH families! This is an on-going activity to host anytime during the year to collect essentials for families from our [Wish List](#) or create your own fundraiser on Facebook or through a fundraising page.
- 4. Skills-Based Support** - DASH is always looking for volunteers who have specific skills to bring to the table, which is a great way to help grow our organization and learn from us as well! We are always looking for enthusiastic volunteers who are willing to help us out with:
 - Grant writing
 - Graphic Design
 - Technology – e.g. Wordpress, Dashboards, Analytics
- 5. Educator** – Do you have a particular skillset or knowledge base that you would like to share with our survivors? DASH has monthly community meetings to bring residents together to learn about a topic that has practical use as they plan and pursue their goals. Bring your knowledge to DASH!

Group Opportunities*

1. **Family Movie Night** - The last Friday of every month DASH hosts a family movie night for DASH residents. Sponsoring a movie night includes providing a movie, bringing movie snacks, and watching the film with us! (8-10 volunteers)
2. **DASH Beautification** - We are always looking for volunteers to organize the children's playroom and engage in outside projects like gardening and support beautification projects. Volunteer groups are encouraged to engage in Domestic Violence 101 training as part of their volunteer experience. (8-10 volunteers)
3. **Denim Day** - Host a "Denim Against DV" day in your office to support DASH! Engage your employees to give back by purchasing stickers to wear jeans on a particular day or throughout a certain month.
4. **Host a Drive-** Help us ensure that every DASH family has the basic essentials and a happy holiday by hosting a drive at your office, apartment building, or among your friends and family. Hosting a drive for the following Wish List items is extremely helpful for over 60 adults and 90 children each year:
 - Back-to-School (backpacks, school supplies)
 - Stock the Pantry (soups, pastas, rice, cereal)
 - Toiletries (New shampoo/conditioner, lotion, soap, toothbrush/paste)
 - Holiday Shop (new toys, gift cards for teens and moms)

**Other than Hosting a Drive, group volunteer opportunities are largely on hold for the foreseeable future as we have put a hold on all in-person volunteer activities as a result of COVID-19.*



Qualities of an Effective Volunteer



Consistent

A good volunteer shows up when they say that they will. Many of DASH's most important programs are only possible because of the work of volunteers. When volunteers don't show up programming may be cancelled or is less effective.



Empathetic

Patience and respect are essential to volunteering at DASH. A good DASH volunteer understands that everyone's experiences and backgrounds are different. This means that treat everyone with patience and openness without judgment or reaction.



Determined

Things will inevitably not always go as planned; residents may not show up to appointments or events. A good volunteer is determined to keep trying and will ask for support when they need it.



Patient

While volunteering at DASH it's important to be patient and go slowly. As much as we would all like to, we cannot and will not change the world overnight. Remember always that your contribution is a small part of a larger contribution. You may not always see the immediate effects of your work, but it is an important and critical part of the big picture.

Patience and respect are essential to volunteering at DASH.

Volunteer Process

1. Application

The first step of the process is to fill out a volunteer application found on the [DASH volunteer website](#).

2. Background Check

All volunteers must undergo a mandatory background check, processing the background check costs \$20 per volunteer.

3. Sign Confidentiality Agreement

All volunteers must sign a confidentiality agreement to protect the safety and wellbeing of survivors of domestic violence and their families in DASH's care.

4. Training

Once an application has been processed, volunteers are contacted to set up training at the DASH office (or virtually) which takes between 30 minutes to an hour. At this meeting volunteers have the chance to discuss how they would like to volunteer and have any questions asked.

Only after volunteers are trained and the background check has been cleared may they begin volunteering at DASH.

5. Next Steps

Volunteers are contacted only once a position opens up which is a good fit for that volunteer. There is no guarantee of placement.

6. Complete Volunteer Hours Log

All volunteers should complete the [hours log](#) so that DASH has a record of their service that will be included in our Annual Report at the end of each year.

Support DASH by Giving

DASH Wish List

You can make a tremendous difference by providing the basic essentials these families need to get started on their path to independence. You can adopt a room or an entire apartment by making a cash donation or donating the following items that we need.

DASH is also in need of and will be grateful to accept financial donations and gift cards (that can be used at CVS, a grocery store, Target, etc.). If you have any questions or would like to make a donation, please contact Jessy Murgel at 202/462-3274 x227 or email jmurgel@dashdc.org. Financial donations can be sent directly to Jessy or can be made online [here](#).

Thank you so much for considering a donation to DASH! We are so grateful for your support.

Urgent Needs

- Diapers (all sizes needed; sizes 4-5 needed most)
- Baby Wipes
- Baby Food & Baby Formula
- Feminine Care Products (tampons/pads)
- New baby & children's clothes
- Toothbrush/Toothpaste
- Shampoo/Conditioner
- Gift cards from CVS, Target, and Grocery Store Gift Cards
- Visa gift cards
- Metro Fare Cards
- Canned Food / Non-Perishable Food (Pasta/Rice/Meal in a Box/Soups, etc.)

Needed items are always in flux, but you can check our [Wish List](#) for the most up to date information.