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## ANSHE CHESED MEN'S SHELTER VOLUNTEER GUIDE

*Let a little water, I pray you, be fetched, and wash your feet, and rest yourselves under the tree: And I will fetch a morsel of bread, and comfort ye your hearts. - Genesis 18:4-5*

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Originally authored by Brian Sokol

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T 212.865.0600 info@anshechesed.org anshechesed.org

## ANSCHE CHESED SHELTER VOLUNTEER GUIDE

Welcome to Congregation Anshe Chesed's Homeless Shelter. The shelter is open seven nights a week, 365 nights a year, thanks to the efforts of volunteers like you. This guide contains everything you need to know about volunteering at our shelter.

The shelter has beds for 10 men every night. Our guests are clients of the Mainchance Drop In Center, part of Grand Central Social Services Corporation and Project Reachout which is part of Goddard Riverside Community Center based at 88th Street and Amsterdam Avenue. All shelter guests are screened by one of these two groups.<sup>1</sup>

The **role of the shelter** is to be a safe place for its guests to wash, eat, relax, and sleep. On any given night, most, if not all of the guests have stayed at the shelter previously. Many stay for weeks or several months at a time. This continuity creates an atmosphere of ease and familiarity with the place. Ideally, this fosters a sense of responsibility toward the shelter and a feeling of community amongst the guests.

The first thing a new volunteer will notice is that the shelter practically runs itself. Or, to be more accurate, the shelter is run by the people it serves. The guests get their own beds, their own food, and they clean up at night and before they leave. Often the volunteer feels like the guest, while the "guests" feel right at home. The role of the volunteer is close to that of a good manager: to stand back and let the men do what they are going to do, intervening, instructing, guiding and troubleshooting only when it becomes necessary. Nevertheless, volunteers should always be aware that ultimately they, rather than the guests, are in the position of authority.

The shelter receives most of its **funding** for food and supplies from Grand Central Neighborhood Social Services Corp. and the Partnership for the Homeless. There is also a shelter fund through Anshe Chesed. If you wish to contribute to the fund you can contact the synagogue office. Food is ordered from a kosher caterers and a dry goods distributor. Laundry service for the linens, towels and blankets is provided by Grand Central.

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<sup>1</sup> During the day, these organizations provide showers, food, and clothing. They also provide medical care, psychiatric care, drug and alcohol rehabilitation programs, and other services. In addition, the clients might receive job training and assistance for their entitlements. After staying at the shelter for a while, a client may move to a subsidized SRO (single room occupancy) apartment and ultimately to permanent housing.

## Who's Who?

After many years of hands-on leadership from Charlie Davidson and Michael Bloome, responsibility for the shelter has shifted to a group of volunteers working in tandem with the Ansche Chesed office. The current structure is as follows:

**Tatyana Leifman** (Volunteer Administrative Coordinator) interfaces with the Volunteer Scheduling Coordinator, the Ansche Chesed office, and the emergency on call volunteer for the month. Tatileif@gmail.com

**Abbe Pick** (Volunteer Coordinator) schedules volunteers for the evening and overnight shifts.

**Wendy Kahn** (Shelter Custodian) drops in once a week to ensure premises and fixtures are clean and safe.

**On Call Volunteer** (646-353-5737) When someone is late for a shift or does not show up, or there is an emergency in the shelter, please call the cell phone number above. Each month a different member will serve in this capacity.

**Charlie Davidson (Shelter Director Emeritus)** While no longer administering the shelter, Charlie retains a keen interest and is willing to be a source for advice and direction. He can be reached at H) 212.222.2840 (W) 845.353.1400

**Michael Bloome (Assistant Director Emeritus)** Michael also remains committed to the shelter and will continue to be a needed resource. He can be reached at (H) 212.666.1448 (W) 212.306.6510 (M) 917.207.9103

**Volunteers** come from among Ansche Chesed members as well as the community. Members of KOE Minyan and Minyan Hadar are regular volunteers and during the academic year JTS and Columbia students also take regular shifts.

## Important Numbers

Shelter Cell Emergency Cell Phone Number: 646-353-7192

Shira Billet: (M) (516) 510-5633

Ansche Chesed Office: 212.865.0600

Josh Hanft AC Executive Director—212.8650600 x209 cell 917-658-0388

After Hours: John Dobbins – Maintenance (H) 914.374.3619

Shelter Phone: 212.865.0600, Ext. 212

Grand Central Drop-In Center: 212.883.0680

Front Desk Evenings Ext. 301

Operations desk Ext. 303

Shelter Bed Coordinator: Sue Antoine Ext 307

Project Reachout: Serena Lewit

Office 212.595-3066 (days); 212-560.2637 (voice mail)

After Hours (M) 646.872.0137

NYPD 24th Precinct 212.678.1811

## VOLUNTEERS' RESPONSIBILITIES

*A person should be more concerned with spiritual than with material matters, but another person's material welfare, is one's own spiritual concern. --Rabbi Israel Salanter (1810-1881)*

### Opening Up

*Open for Me the Gates of Righteousness - Psalms 118:19*

**Arrival.** Arrive by 7:00 PM. (If the door is locked ring the bell – 2nd button on the doorpost). Obtain the key to the choir loft which is located in the maintenance room to the right when you first walk in. The key is hanging on a nail (attached to a small wooden block), to the right just inside the door. If the office is locked the key should be on the security desk.

**Set-Up.** Before allowing the men upstairs, go up first and be sure the previous group has vacated and that the furniture has been cleared. *If it is only a few items, ask guests to help. If furniture needs to be moved, ask security to contact maintenance.*

Next, open the choir loft and remove the red container which contains the volunteer log, ring of keys, and alarm clock. Put these in the volunteer room. Plug in the clock, set the time and set the alarm for 5:25 AM and make sure the alarm is in the “on” position.

Note: there are two overhead light switches in the volunteer room – on the left as you enter and the other to the right behind the refrigerator.

Next, open the pantry located in the back right of the guest room. This pantry contains two microwave ovens, television set, toiletries, and a supply of dry goods. Roll out the microwaves and TV; one microwave goes in hall, the other in the shelter room. ***Always keep the pantry locked and only open it upon request to replenish a cabinet item or to provide a toiletry item.***

**Welcome Guests.** Once you are settled, invite the guests upstairs. Ask who is new and give them a copy of the shelter rules located in front of the logbook. Collect authorization letters from Project Reachout guests and the single manifest for all Grand Central guests. No one is allowed to stay in the shelter without a letter or their names on the manifest.

The men will start bringing down beds – We suggest two men per bed but many men are OK to do this alone. If someone tries to drag a bed down by himself and has any difficulty have him ask another guest for help.

**Volunteer Bed.** Ask a guest to help bring down one volunteer bed. We have two volunteer beds and both should be locked when not in use. For one the combination is 1212 and the other has a padlock and the key is on the key ring. It's nice for the overnight volunteers if you will also make up the bed.

**Departure.** If the overnight volunteer hasn't arrived by 9:10 pm, call 646-353-7192 or Shira (see numbers on page 2).

Please return the key on the wooden ring to the maintenance office. If the office is locked, leave the key on the security desk.

**Call In.** At the end of your shift please make the following three calls.

- Shelter voice mail 212.865.0600 Ext. 212 and report any notes that you have put into the log book.
- Project Reachout voice mail 212.560.2637 and report any issues concerning their clients. Be sure to report any guests who did not arrive or were late. No need to call if no guests come.
- Grand Central 212.883.0680 Ext. 307 and report any issues concerning Grand Central clients.

Note: To obtain an outside line press one of the line buttons 1-4, then press 1.

*No one can stay in shelter if they can't follow the rules. Please report all violations in the log book and when phoning in your report at end of the shift.*

## The Log Book

*On that night the king could not sleep, so he commanded that the book of records, the chronicles, be brought.- Esther 6:1*

The logbook is the way Anshe Chesed volunteers document incidents and communicate with one another and the shelter coordinators. It is a good idea to read the notes made in the log over the last several days in order to find out if there are any on-going issues.

Every night, volunteers record the names of the guests staying in the shelter. No one is allowed to stay at the shelter unless they have been sent by either Project Reachout or Grand Central.

Each of the **Project Reachout** clients will have his own letter (white paper) indicating he has been sent to the shelter through Project Reachout. In addition, the back of each letter lists the names of all the guests sent to the shelter that night. Thus, if one person forgets his paper, you can look for his name on the back of another person's sheet. File one of the letters in the back of the log book and dispose of the others.

The group from **Grand Central** arrives on a bus and has a manifest listing all the guests. This form should be signed, the blue copy filed in the log book, and the remaining copies returned to one of the GCP guests in the morning. Volunteers should confirm that all of the guests that were sent to the shelter actually show up.

**Some guests have the initials "OT" next to their name, which means they will arrive on their "own transportation" instead of on the bus.** Often these are men who are coming from a job and may arrive a little later. The names of any no-shows should be recorded in the logbook and on the manifest.

The logbook is the place to record any incidents you think should be known to the next volunteers and to the coordinators. The log book should also be used for suggestions about ways to improve the shelter, observations about particular guests, notations regarding supplies needed, and so forth. However as the shelter director doesn't read these notes daily, please make sure that any important issues are noted as part of your end of shift phone calls. Of course, the volunteer should call one of the directors immediately if there is a serious problem with a guest.

Please note that the shelter coordinators listen to the voice mail messages almost every day so include anything that requires attention.

## **Meals**

*Where there is no bread, there is no Torah. -Avot 3:21*

There is a freezer and refrigerator in the loft which are accessible after some of the beds are down. They contain frozen meals, juice and bread.

The guests help themselves to their own microwavable meals, or they make tuna fish or some other kind of cold meal. The men are allowed to eat as much as they like. The men are not permitted to bring in food from outside.

Check the refrigerator in the choir loft and throw out any donated food that has spoiled. Normally, there will only be bread, juice, and milk in refrigerator. Also please restock the refrigerator with some of the cans of juice stacked up next to it. Check the metal Supply Cabinet located just outside the Volunteer Room: toss stale food and restock supplies that are low. Make sure the microwaves are cleaned nightly. (Sponges are in the cabinet over the slop sink in the hallway.)

The city requires that we keep a daily temperature log of the fridge and freezer. Please check the thermometers and note the date, time and temp in the log.

*Please see the attached Shelter Kashrut Policy for complete details on what food is allowed in the shelter.*

## Laundry

*And the LORD said unto Moses, Go unto the people, and sanctify them to day and tomorrow, and let them wash their clothes. -Exodus 19:10*

Dirty sheets, towels and blankets go into plastic bags on hooks in the stairwell. Put out a new bag when one gets half full and tie up the dirty bag after confirming it doesn't have sheets, towels, or blankets mixed together. Mark full bags "used" and put the bag in the grey bin located in the stairwell next to the shelter room. Wet towels are hung on the banisters to dry. Put the dry ones in the dirty bag at the beginning of your shift.

There is a box of vinyl gloves on a shelf in the choir loft or in the cabinet above the sink, which you should wear if you handle dirty laundry. Laundry bags are located on the bottom linen shelf.

***Bags of clean linens are located in the loft. If you have time please restock the shelves with clean sheets, towels, pillowcases and blankets.***

## Overnight

*Grant O Lord that we lie down in peace...Spread over us your shelter of peace.*  
- From the Evening Prayers



The overnight volunteer should arrive by 9 pm. If the door is locked, ring the buzzer button marked "shelter". Most of the guests are already in bed by this time. The routine responsibilities of the overnight volunteer are simple: make sure any perishable food items, such as mayonnaise and creamer are not left out overnight; make sure the lights and the TV are off by 10 PM; check that the alarm is set for 5:25 AM and turned on; and turn off hallway lights.

The keys to the lock on the volunteer beds are kept with all the other keys. If the opening volunteer has not brought the bed down, ask one of the men for help. Lock door to volunteer room when you sleep.

## **Morning**

*You should strengthen yourself like a lion to wake up and serve the Creator; it should be as if you awakened the dawn. - Shulchan Aruch, Orech Chaim, 1:1.*

Wake-up time is 5:30 am in order for the men to catch the bus which comes at about 6:00 AM. The volunteer may need to play the role of "camp counselor" in getting some of the guests out of bed and it's wise to make several announcements that everyone needs to help clean up.

Strip sheets from volunteer bed and put them in a dirty laundry bag. Leave the pillow and blanket in the bed. Lock the bed and ask one of the guests to help return it to the right alcove inside choir loft.

The volunteer should supervise the men cleaning up the room. Though, it is really the job of the guests rather than the volunteer, the volunteer shouldn't leave unless the room is clean. Open the window in the guest room as part of the disinfectant process to clean the room. Turn off air conditioners if they were used during the night.

Ask the guests to clean tables and put away the chairs. Give the tables and microwaves a wipe with sponge from the sink near volunteer room. Empty juice cans go in the blue recycle container in the corner near guests' bathroom. Juice cans that aren't empty can be put in the refrigerator.

You should sign the copies of the Grand Central manifest and return the pink and yellow copies to one of the clients of GC to give to the driver. The blue copy goes in the logbook with past copies.

**Call In.** At the end of your shift please call in to report any notes that you have put into the log book. See “Call In” phone information on page 4.

Return the red container with logbook, the alarm clock and the keys to the choir loft. The choir loft locks automatically behind you. ***Make sure the separate key on the wooden block is not among the keys locked in the choir loft.*** That key should have already been returned down stairs the previous night. If it was not, then bring it down in the morning and leave it at the guard station.

**When you leave the synagogue, check to make sure that all the guests have left, and then close the synagogue doors firmly behind you.** If the bus hasn’t arrived by 6:30 am, call the shelter director. Synagogue maintenance staff should have already arrived by then, so you can leave while the men wait for the bus. (If the weather is OK and you need to leave it’s OK to close up the building and have the men wait outside.)

### What to Do if...

***The keys to the choir loft are missing.*** There is an emergency key on a nail above the slop sink. If it’s not there, the guard or the maintenance crew has a spare key. Or call the shelter director.

***Someone shows up who is not on one of the lists.*** This happens occasionally due to confusion at Grand Central. For many reasons (safety, accountability, insurance), **no one is allowed to stay at the shelter who is not on either the Project Reachout or Grand Central paperwork.** Anyone not on the list should be informed of the policy and asked to leave. Call the shelter emergency cell phone if you aren’t sure what to do.

***There is an argument among the guests.*** We have found that merely asking those involved what is going on tends to dissolve the controversy. Otherwise, a brief discussion and a sensible suggestion may be in order. The guests are happy to be placed at this shelter and do not wish to jeopardize their placement by engaging in any disorderly behavior. Details of any arguments, including the names of those involved should be recorded in the log and phoned in at the end of your shift.

***A situation with the guests cannot be easily controlled..*** Call on the synagogue staff. If that doesn’t work, call the shelter director. If it is an emergency, call 911. Don’t be shy about calling if you are uncomfortable.

***The building alarm goes off.*** Contact the emergency cell phone for instructions on how to shut off the alarm. Please note that the key to the locked sanctuary is on the

wooden block that holds the other keys. If the director is unavailable, call Josh Hanft for John Dobbin. (Phone numbers are on first page.)

Try and determine the cause of the alarm. If it was set off by one of the guests, be sure to get his name and group.

The police are alerted when the alarm goes off, so you should listen for the police to call on the volunteer phone or come to the door. If they do, identify yourself, and let them know what happened. Depending on the circumstances, the police may wish investigate further.

**Someone arrives late.** Guests are supposed to arrive by 9:30. We don't let anyone in after 10:00. If you have questions call the Emergency Cell Phone.

**A guest wants to "leave and come back".** Once a guest is here, they cannot leave and come back until the next day.

**Supplies are low.** Make a note in the logbook and report at the end of your shift any food, linens, cleansers, or other items that seem to be gone or short. Food deliveries are on Monday or Thursday. Laundry deliveries are on Wednesday.

**One of the guests wants to smoke.** The Rabbi has decided that the shelter guests may smoke in their bathroom at any time or outside on the steps ONLY when there is a security guard on duty. Under no circumstances may guests go outside and prop the door open when there is no security guard on duty. Please enforce policy uniformly.

**You're bored.** If you have completed the checklist of volunteer responsibilities and still need something to do, consider the following:

- 1) Get to know the guests. Although sleep and TV are the main activities for most of the guests, others are happy to talk and have a lot to say.
- 2) Clean or straighten. It is a rare day when the cabinet doesn't need straightening, the pantry organizing, the laundry area fixed up, and so on. If you want to win the coveted Most Valuable Volunteer award, grab some cleanser from the cabinet above the hallway sink and attack the fridge and microwaves.
- 3) Recruit. Use the phone to call a friend and tell them what a wonderful time you are having at the shelter and that they should volunteer too.
- 4) Meditate on the following paradox: "Sometimes you are doing something when you are doing nothing."

## **EMERGENCY PROCEDURES**

Ansche Chesed Homeless Shelter

251 West 100th Street

212.865.0600, ext. 212

An emergency is a situation requiring immediate action to protect health or property. Handle an emergency at the shelter as you would deal with one at home – only at the shelter you have more resources. Please read these procedures so that you will be prepared.

### **1) STAY CALM**

You aren't alone in handling the situation. There may be synagogue staff still in the building. The guests may be able to assist. You can call 911.

### **2) ASSESS THE SITUATION**

- Before calling for help, determine what happened and do what you can to minimize further damage.
- In case of injury, take action to prevent further injury while waiting for help to arrive. Generally, it is best not to move an injured person unless his current position is harmful.
- THE FIRST AID KIT IS IN THE LOFT ON THE SHELF NEXT TO WHERE WE KEEP THE RED BIN & LOG BOOK.
- In case of fire, everyone should exit the building via one of the stairways. Do not use elevators. Pull the fire alarm, which is on the first floor next to the elevator, to alert any occupants of the building. Call 911 to summon the Fire Department. There is a fire extinguisher hanging by the shelter room door.

### **3) CALL FOR HELP**

Alert the guests to the emergency so they can either help or get out of the way. If it is before 9 pm, have one of the guests go downstairs to notify the security guard or maintenance staff of the situation. Then call 911 (To obtain an outside line press one of the line buttons 1-4, then press 1.). The people at 911 are trained to determine next steps. They will ask what has happened and what is now happening. **(911 will ask for the shelter address; it is 251 West 100th Street.** Please be patient in answering their questions, so that they can determine the best way to help. If they decide to send help, make sure someone is downstairs to let them in.

#### **4) CALL THE SHELTER DIRECTOR**

Once the situation is under control, call the Emergency Cell Phone Number to report what happened. **646-353-5737**-The Volunteer will determine what further action, if any, is required, and may come to the shelter to relieve you or to assist in resolving the situation.

This letter on the Shelter Food and Kashrut policy has been adapted from a general Anshe Chesed mailing from Rabbi Jeremy Kalmanofsky:

*Our homeless shelter has long operated on the basis of the synagogue's regular Kashrut policy. It has been a fully Kosher, meat-only operation. As Anshe Chesed's Kashrut policy regarding meat dictates, 100% of the shelter food is prepared under rabbinic supervision and no outside food can be brought in. Moreover, since we provide only meat, this results in certain oddities, like the guests having to use non-dairy creamer to eat morning cereal.*

*We've become convinced that this policy unduly penalizes the shelter guests (99% of whom are not Jewish) and wastes food which they could enjoy. So after discussions with the board, we've decided to alter our policy.*

- 1. We are aware that we cannot successfully keep the guests from bringing in their own food. We still request and expect that they will not bring in food. But given that we cannot hermetically seal the shelter from a man who stopped at McDonald's before coming to the shelter, we decided it would be wiser to manage the situation to maximally benefit the guests -- who, after all, are coming for our help.*
- 2. Anshe Chesed will continue to serve the guests only kosher meat meals prepared under rabbinic supervision. However, now AC will permit the shelter to accept gifts from the caterers in the building and other shul events, even if the food is dairy. Until now, if a simchah lunch ended with left-over bagels and cream cheese, the shelter declined the gift. Now, we can accept such a gift, put it in the shelter fridge and our guests can eat it off of their disposable plates.*
- 3. Private individuals can give shelter guests gifts of cooked food, containing no non-kosher ingredients, even if cooked in non-Kosher kitchens. These gifts should be wrapped and marked for the shelter exclusively, and go directly to the shelter or shelter fridge, keeping it separate from other AC use.*
- 4. None of this has any application during Passover when no food can come into the building unless it is sealed and under rabbinic supervision. AC will be the exclusive food provider at that time.*
- 5. What if a shelter guest is Jewish? This is a rare but not unheard of occurrence. Will AC feed him meat-and-milk or treif? This is complicated. We certainly do not want*

*to feed a Jewish person non-kosher food in the synagogue. So we will place a sign in the shelter reminding Jewish guests of Kashrut requirements, and letting them know that we do not vouch for the Kashrut of food donated to the shelter from outside homes. In the end, the guests -- like every one of us -- are responsible for their own Jewish observance.*

**6. What does this mean for Shelter volunteers?**

- a. When a donation of food arrives, be certain that it is placed either in the shelter fridge or on the shelter table.
- b. Mark leftovers, "Shelter Only" and put them in the fridge or freezer. It's important that nothing winds up in the Volunteer Room which is a nursery school class room in the daytime.
- c. If you learn that one of our guests is Jewish, please let give him the note on our food policy. (Copies are in the log book.) Also, please let me know and I will pass this information on to Rabbi Kalmanofsky.
- d. If too much food arrives and you wind up throwing things out, please let me know so we can regulate what we get.

As always, thanks for your help,