



**MET COUNCIL**

The Largest Jewish Communal Social Safety Net in America

# **Volunteer Handbook**

**TIME FOR GOOD**

UJA Federation

*“Thank you for sharing your time, skills, and kindness with the individuals we serve. Volunteers are vital to the accomplishment of Met Council’s mission. Your service allows the Volunteer Services Team to build the capacity of Met Council. We are able to reach thousands more vulnerable New Yorkers each year with your support. Thank you!”*

**Shaina Goldberg, Director, Volunteer Services**

## **Introduction to Met Council**

The Metropolitan Council on Jewish Poverty (Met Council) is a social services agency striving to alleviate poverty in New York City. For 45 years, Met Council has been a defender and advocate for New Yorkers in need, and has raised awareness around the growing problem of Jewish poverty. Met Council works to aid, sustain, and empower all New Yorkers in need.

The Volunteer Services Department supports Met Council’s greater mission to provide comprehensive social services to all those in need while treating every individual with dignity and respect. Our Volunteers provide programmatic support to expand Met Council core services, all under the banner of service learning, poverty education, and community outreach and engagement. The Volunteer Services Department manages hundreds of programs each year, prioritizing projects which focus on addressing the needs of older adults, alleviating hunger in New York City, and benefits outreach access and education.

If you or someone you know is in need, please contact our crisis intervention unit at 212-453-9539 and a case worker will help you.

## **Met Council’s Mission Statement**

The Metropolitan Council on Jewish Poverty is the voice of the Jewish poor and the first line of defense for our community’s needy. We fight poverty through comprehensive social services and treat every individual with dignity and respect. Our network of grassroots Jewish Community Councils strengthens families and neighborhoods throughout New York City.

Find out more at <https://www.metcouncil.org/who-we-are/> and be sure to follow us on Instagram @metcouncil!

## **Introduction to the Volunteer Services Department**

The Volunteer Services Department is striving to ensure that Met Council impacts **all** communities in need across New York City through **strategic volunteer engagement**.

To get involved with Met Council’s Volunteer Services Department, please visit <https://www.metcouncil.org/get-involved/> or email us at [volunteer@metcouncil.org](mailto:volunteer@metcouncil.org) or call our Volunteer Services Department, at 212-453-9675.

We welcome individuals and groups of all ages and backgrounds.

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## **Met Council Services**

### **Affordable Housing**

Met Council has been a leader in producing affordable housing for vulnerable populations in New York City. Our housing portfolio has grown to over 1,600 units in the five boroughs through a combination of public and private sources. On-site social services are available for residents at each property.

### **Project Metropair**

Met Council's Home Services helps the most vulnerable in our community live in their homes with safety, dignity, and comfort. Our free handyman service will, for example, replace door locks for older adults living in unsafe communities. Project Metropair will also install a grab bar in their shower for seniors to protect themselves from falling.

### **Crisis Intervention**

Crisis Intervention social services are available at Met Council's main office and at local agencies throughout the five boroughs. Recipients range from families suffering a loss of income who are suddenly unable to pay rent or utilities, to seniors living on fixed incomes who can no longer pay for basic necessities, or to individuals who need assistance with renewing their benefits applications.

### **Family Violence Services**

Domestic and family violence is a harsh reality in both Jewish and non-Jewish communities. Met Council's Family Violence Department was founded to provide comprehensive services to all victims of family violence, regardless of religious affiliation, while at the same time continuing to increase awareness of this growing issue within the Jewish community.

### **Holocaust Survivors**

The Met Council Holocaust Survivor Program is a multi-faceted program that assists Holocaust Survivors with services such as emergency financial assistance, kosher food package delivery, holistic case management, short-term counseling, and coordinating social events.

### **Kosher Food Network**

Whether they're large families struggling to feed their children, new immigrants with little income, or elderly individuals who lack nutritious food, Met Council's Kosher Food Network meets the needs of all who are hungry. Met Council helps struggling New Yorkers through a holistic care program of food packages, emergency food vouchers, and soup kitchens. All food provided is kosher, making us a unique provider for the needy Jewish population. Our nutritional resources are available to anyone in need.

### **Benefits Access**

Our Benefits Access department helps low-income New Yorkers gain access to public benefits. Through community outreach and engagement, Met Council informs New Yorkers about public benefits and serves as a leader in facilitated enrollment in Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program (SNAP, formerly known as food stamps) throughout New York City. We provide SNAP services in areas where it is needed most through a network of Jewish Community Councils (JCCs) and community-based organizations. Met Council connects people to food benefits and other resources to aid them on the path to self-sufficiency. Benefits Access staff are out-stationed throughout New York City and speak over seven languages to help reduce cultural and linguistic barriers for low-income communities.

## **Release Forms**

*All volunteers and are required to sign the following release forms. There may be additional forms to sign depending on the department where the volunteer will be participating. A staff member from the Volunteer Services department will inform you if there are more forms to complete.*

**Met Council Volunteers agree to abide by the Met Council Code of Conduct and Ethics, which has been made available to all volunteers. Met Council volunteers are responsible for having read the Photo & Video Release policy. All Met Council Volunteers are required to sign a Confidentiality and Release Form.**

**The Confidentiality and Release Form asks that Volunteers respect our client's privacy and do not take pictures of clients. Volunteers are responsible for abiding by Met Council's rules, regulations, and policies, including anti-harassment and anti-drug policies.**

## **Roles, Rules, and Regulations**

### **Definition of a Volunteer/Intern**

A volunteer is anyone who, without compensation or expectation of compensation beyond expense reimbursement, performs a task at the direction of and on behalf of Met Council. A volunteer must be officially accepted and enrolled by the agency prior to the performance of the task. Volunteers are not considered employees of Met Council.

### **Service at Discretion of the Agency**

Volunteers who do not adhere to the rules and procedures of Met Council, or who fail to satisfactorily perform their assignment(s) are subject to dismissal. Possible grounds for dismissal may include, but are not limited to, misconduct or insubordination, theft or misuse of property, or failure to abide by agency policies and procedures, and failure to satisfactorily perform assigned duties. Completion of internship does not guarantee employment.

### **Attendance, Timesheets, and Punctuality**

Volunteers should make every effort to maintain all scheduled appointments and meetings to which they have elected to attend. If you are going to be late or absent please contact the VSD or staff contact as soon as possible. Please advise Met Council of any anticipated absences such as vacation, or personal business. All volunteers at Met Council who provide five service hours or more at a time are encouraged to take a half an hour lunch break.

### **Medical Emergency Procedures**

In the event that you become aware of a person who is seriously injured or ill, call 911. Notify Security (if applicable) and Human Resources. Do not move the affected person. If it is Worker's Compensation-related, please fill out a Worker's Compensation Incident Report. Contact the Human Resources Department for more information.

### **Incident Reports**

For any serious injury or illness, you should first call 9-1-1. For minor illness or injury, there may be a First Aid Kit on site at any housing site or community partner site. After any incident- major or minor- an Incident Report Form needs to be completed on site as soon as possible by a VSD staff member.

### **Office Attire**

As representatives of a public-service organization, you are expected to demonstrate the highest level of professionalism in your attire. In addition, you must be particularly sensitive to the traditions of modesty in many of the communities we serve. Under no circumstances are the following considered acceptable attire: sweat pants, shorts, spaghetti strap tops, or flip flops. On Fridays, Volunteers who are not meeting with clients or representatives of other agencies may wear clean and un-ripped jeans, sneakers, or running shoes.

Volunteers may be required to wear closed toe shoes and clothing appropriate for movement for safety purposes, and will be notified in advance when these situations may arise.

If you have any questions about appropriate office attire you should ask your supervisor or Human Resources for guidance.

### **Media, and Other Third Party Inquiries**

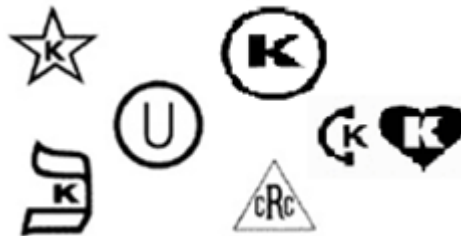
All media inquiries, whether verbal or written, regarding Met Council, it's clients, or suppliers, must be immediately referred to your supervisor and/or Director of Marketing and Communications.

### **Screening/Reference Checks**

For some tasks, or as a precursor to being selected as a volunteer or intern, you may be required to submit professional and/or personal references and/or samples of work.

### **Kosher Rules and Food at Met Council**

Kosher (*kashrut*) is the set of Jewish dietary laws. All food purchased by Met Council and all food at Met Council events must be Kosher. Kosher products fall under the category of meat or parve (not dairy or meat) or dairy and you cannot combine meat products with dairy products. You know if something is kosher by looking for the following symbols (hechshers):



Non-Kosher food and drink products are permitted at Met Council but may only be heated or prepared in a kitchen appliance that does not read "Kosher"

Whenever possible, all staff, volunteers, and interns should eat in the kitchen.

## **Volunteer Roles**

Met Council Volunteers serve in a wide variety of positions across our various departments. Therefore, our precise volunteer opportunities are subject to change according to our changing needs. Met Council's most regular volunteering opportunities are described below.

### **Office Volunteer**

Met Council's Office Volunteers provide administrative support to our staff in various departments. Common tasks include clerical work such as filing, scanning, copying, labeling, and shredding. Volunteers may also assist with specific tasks related to special projects, such as Passover Food Card Mailing or Toy Drive Organization.

Other in-office volunteer opportunities may include Project Reach-Out, Clothing Closet Organization, and Pantry Stocking.

### **Senior Building Volunteer**

Met Council's Volunteer Services Department hosts regular social programming in our low-income senior buildings. Volunteers may help serve food and socialize at a community dinner or a weekend brunch. Skilled volunteers may inquire about leading specific classes or workshops such as Chair Yoga or Healthy Eating.

Volunteer opportunities in our senior buildings vary according to the specific building, and resident interest.

### **Pantry Volunteer**

Met Council connects volunteers to pantries across New York City. Most of our food pantry volunteers do not volunteer in Met Council's main office but at a specific pantry. Pantry volunteer tasks may include, but are not limited to, helping to unload a delivery, unpacking and stocking pantry shelves, breaking down boxes, packing individual pantry bags, taking client orders, helping clients use our new digital pantry system, and delivering packed bags to clients.

The exact volunteer schedule will vary by site, so it is very important for pantry volunteers to check-in with their Met Council contact.

Please note: Food Pantry volunteers are responsible for getting to the pantry where they have decided to volunteer on their own. Pantry volunteers may be volunteering at a Met Council community partner, or a local JCC, or a Met Council owned building. Volunteers are encouraged to ask questions about their specific sites!

## **Technology**

Met Council maintains electronic equipment and communication systems to conduct Met Council business. They may not be used for personal use, unless they are authorized in advance in writing, except as otherwise permitted by Section 7 of the National Labor Relations Act. In addition, they may not be used to download, copy, store, create, transmit or distribute any offensive materials or to engage in any illegal activity. Use of equipment or systems for personal business is not permitted. Misuse of Met Council technology is a serious infraction and grounds for disciplinary action.

Met Council's policy prohibiting harassment applies to the use of Met Council's electronic communications systems. No one may use electronic communications in a manner which may be construed by others as harassing or offensive based on race, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, age, disability, religious beliefs or any other characteristics protected by federal, state or local law. All messages composed, sent or received on Met Council electronic systems are the property of Met Council. Met Council may access and review all technological activity without notifying the user.

Anyone who receives objectionable material should immediately notify their supervisor and the Human Resources Department and inform the sender that Met Council policy considers the material objectionable. The messages should be forwarded to the Human Resources Department. Volunteers and interns should not forward the message to others.

## **Use of Phones, Electronic Devices, Mail Supplies and Property**

Met Council's supplies, copy equipment, pens, paper and stationery are for Met Council business and may not be used for personal business or private needs. Volunteers and interns are prohibited from using Met Council postage for personal mail. Volunteers and interns may not use Met Council's telephones to harass others or send anonymous messages. Misuse of telephone, e-mail, fax equipment or other supplies or property may result in disciplinary action.



## **Anti-Discrimination Policy**

### **Americans with Disabilities Act**

Met Council will make reasonable accommodations for the known physical or mental disabilities (as defined by applicable state and federal law) of an otherwise qualified individual who is an applicant or a volunteer and who has made Met Council aware of his or her disability, unless undue hardship would result, as defined by applicable laws.

Any qualified applicant or volunteer with a disability who requires an accommodation in order to perform the essential functions of the job should contact Human Resources to request such an accommodation. When you make a request, please be prepared to describe the nature of the requested accommodation and to provide any necessary documentation to verify your condition.

### **Harassment and/or Discrimination**

Met Council is committed to providing a workplace free of unlawful harassment, discrimination and retaliation. Our policies prohibit any form of harassment of its employees/interns/volunteers, regardless of whether that harassment is targeted specifically to one individual or, generally, to a group or the group to which an individual belongs, because of the individual's or group's race, religion, color, gender, age, national origin, ancestry, marital status, mental condition, sexual orientation, physical and mental disability, pregnancy, alienage or citizenship status, creed, genetic predisposition or carrier status or any other basis protected by federal, state or local law, ordinance or regulation.

Under this policy, harassment is defined as verbal or physical conduct that denigrates or shows hostility or aversion toward an individual because of his/her race, religion, color, gender, age, national origin, ancestry, marital status, mental condition, sexual orientation, physical and mental disability, pregnancy, alienage or citizenship status, creed, genetic predisposition or carrier status or any other basis protected by law or that of his/her relatives, friends or associates, and that: (i) has the purpose or effect of creating an intimidating, hostile or offensive volunteer environment; (ii) has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's volunteer performance; or (iii) otherwise adversely affects an individual's volunteering.

Prohibited harassment includes, but is not limited to, improperly motivated epithets, slurs, derogatory comments or jokes, intimidation, negative stereotyping, threats, assault or any physical interference with your normal work or movement directed at individual employees, relatives, friends, associates or any other group to which you may belong.

Met Council also prohibits non-verbal harassment, such as obscene gestures, suggestive or insulting sounds, and suggestive or obscene notes, letters or e-mails. Harassment also includes written or graphic material placed on computer screens, walls, bulletin boards or elsewhere on Met Council's premises, or circulated in the workplace that denigrates or shows hostility or aversion toward an individual or group.

Met Council's anti-harassment policy applies to all applicants and employees/interns/volunteers and prohibits harassment, discrimination and retaliation whether engaged in by co-workers, by a supervisor, or by someone not directly connected to it (e.g., an outside vendor, consultant or customer). Conduct prohibited by this policy is unacceptable in the workplace and in any work-related setting outside the workplace. Simply put, we will not tolerate any form of harassment.

## **Sexual Harassment**

Met Council prohibits sexual harassment in the workplace. Sexual harassment is defined as requests for sexual favors and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature that: (i) has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's performance or creates an offensive, hostile or intimidating environment; (ii) is explicitly or implicitly made a condition of volunteering at Met Council; or (iii) submission to or rejection by an individual is used as the basis for decisions affecting such individual. This includes, but is not limited to, unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, visual, verbal, or physical conduct of a sexual nature when such conduct is made a term or condition of a volunteer, or as the basis for volunteer decision, whether specifically stated or implied; visual, verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature that has the purpose or effect of interfering with volunteer performance or creating an intimidating, hostile or offensive environment. This includes the possession and/or display of any form of sexually explicit computer graphics.

Examples of such behavior include, but are not limited to, the following: Verbal conduct: sexual requests, comments, jokes, slurs, invitations; offering volunteer benefits in exchange for sexual favors; making or threatening reprisals after a negative response to a sexual advance or advances; the use of sexually patronizing terms, especially after being told they are offensive (keep in mind that what some consider flattery, others may consider offensive). Physical conduct: physical advances, touching, impeding or blocking movement. Non-verbal conduct: sexual gesturing, as well as displaying objects, graphics, posters, cartoons or drawings of a sexual or suggestive nature. Both as a matter of law and common decency, every employee/intern/volunteer is entitled to an environment free of unlawful discrimination and harassment. Accordingly, unlawful harassment will not be tolerated. Violation of Met Council's Harassment policies will result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination of assignment.

## **Met Council Complaint Procedure**

Anyone who believes that he/she is the victim of harassment, discrimination or retaliation on the basis of gender, race, ethnicity, national origin, citizenship, sexual orientation, religion, age, medical condition, physical disability, mental disability or marital status or any other characteristic protected by law should immediately contact the Chief Human Resources Officer, by telephone (at 212-453-9583) or in person, regardless of the offender's identity or position. All such information will be held in confidence to the extent possible and will only be disclosed on a need-to-know basis in order to investigate and resolve the situation. Although generally handled as set forth above, complaints may also be made on Met Council's Hotline (see the Code) anonymously or otherwise.

We also ask you to report any incidents of harassment, discrimination or retaliation of which you may be aware, even though you are not the victim or target of such harassment, discrimination or retaliation. Met Council will investigate and take such action as appears warranted under the circumstances. If it is determined that harassment has occurred, we will immediately take remedial action, commensurate with the severity of the offense, up to and including dismissal. Met Council will notify the individual who made the complaint of any action taken.

Met Council will not retaliate, nor will it tolerate retaliation, against employees/interns/volunteers who complain about harassment or discrimination in the workplace or who participate in an investigation of such reports. The availability of this complaint procedure does not preclude individuals who believe they are being subjected to harassing conduct from promptly advising the offender that his or her behavior is unwelcome and requesting that it be discontinued.

## **Workplace Violence Policy**

Met Council strives to provide a safe workplace for all employees/interns/volunteers. Met Council does not tolerate any type of violence committed by or against employees/interns/volunteers. Employees are prohibited from making threats or engaging in violent activities. The following list of behaviors, while not all inclusive, provides examples of prohibited conduct:

- Causing physical injury to another person
- Making threatening remarks
- Aggressive or hostile behavior that creates a reasonable fear of injury to another person or subjects another individual to emotional distress
- Intentionally damaging Met Council property or property of another employee
- Possession of a weapon while on Met Council property or while on Met Council business
- Committing acts motivated by, or related to, sexual harassment or domestic violence

## **All Weapons Banned**

Met Council specifically prohibits the possession of weapons by any employee/intern/volunteers while on Met Council property or on Met Council business. This ban includes keeping or transporting a weapon in a vehicle. Weapons include but are not limited to, guns, knives, explosives and other items with the potential to inflict harm. Appropriate disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal, may be taken against any employee/intern/volunteer that violates this policy. Any potentially dangerous situations must be reported immediately to your supervisor and/or to the Chief Human Resources Officer. All reported incidents will be investigated promptly. Threats, threatening conduct or any other acts of aggression or violence in the workplace will not be tolerated. Any employee/volunteer/intern determined to have committed such acts may be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal, as well as being reported to the proper authorities.

## **Compliance**

The orderly and efficient operation of our organization requires that employees/interns/volunteers maintain proper standards of conduct at all times. All employees/interns/volunteers must report unsafe conditions that may violate any regulation or safety standard to their supervisor and to the Chief Human Resources Officer. Employees who fail to maintain proper standards of conduct towards their work, their colleagues or parties that transact or seek to transact business with Met Council, or who violate any of Met Council's policies or procedures, are subject to appropriate disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment. All instances of misconduct should be referred to the Chief Human Resources Officer immediately. Listed below are some specific examples of impermissible conduct (although this is not an exhaustive list):

- Reporting to work under the influence of alcohol
- Illegally possessing or using narcotics or drugs, or working under the influence of these
- Fighting or using obscene, abusive, offensive, threatening or otherwise inappropriate language or gestures
- Threatening, intimidating, coercing or fighting with another employee, or any incident of sexual harassment, by word or action
- Performing any act, whether by word, physical action or any other means, that may arouse hatred or ill will against any individual or group on the basis of their race, religion, color, national origin, ancestry, gender, sexual orientation, marital status, age, physical or mental disability, or mental condition, pregnancy, alienage or citizenship status, creed, genetic predisposition or carrier status or any other classification made unlawful by federal, state or local laws

- Theft, fraud, or misappropriation of property belonging to Met Council, to another employee or to a visitor
- Possessing firearms or other weapons while on Met Council property
- Excessive tardiness or absenteeism
- Falsification of volunteer application or other Met Council records
- Unauthorized posting or removal of bulletins or notices on Met Council property, including email to other employees
- Use of Met Council computers to view or disseminate inappropriate, illegal, or offensive material from the internet or from electronic materials received from another source
- Unauthorized possession, use, copying, accessing, or reading of Met Council records, or disclosure of confidential information
- Engaging in conduct harmful or likely to cause harm to Met Council's reputation, good will or interests
- Any other behavior that is disruptive, discourteous, illegal, unprofessional, or otherwise inappropriate for a business office

### **Smoke-Free Workplace**

In keeping with Met Council's intention to provide a safe and healthful workplace and in compliance with the law, Met Council has declared all work sites as non-smoking facilities. Smoking is permitted outside of the building and smokers are responsible for keeping the area clean. You are protected from retaliatory action or from being subjected to any adverse personal action for exercising or attempting to exercise their rights under the smoking policy. Violations of this policy may result in appropriate corrective disciplinary action, up to and including discharge.

### **Drug and Alcohol Abuse**

Manufacture, distribution, dispensation, possession, or use of any illegal drug, or controlled substance or alcohol while on Met Council premises is strictly prohibited. These activities constitute serious violation of organization rules, and can create unsafe situations that may substantially interfere with job performance. Employees/Interns/Volunteers that violate this policy are subject to appropriate disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal.

### **Ownership of Property and Information**

As a condition of volunteering, Met Council owns the work product created by Met Council employees, including written and electronic documents, audio and video recordings, system codes and any concepts, ideas, inventions or other intellectual property developed for Met Council, regardless of whether the intellectual property is actually used by Met Council. Met Council will continue to own any work product created during volunteering for Met Council, even after volunteering. When you dismiss for any reason, you must return all Met Council property, including without limitation, documents, files, records, manuals, information stored on a personal computer or on a thumb drive, supplies and equipment (including cell phones and laptops) or office supplies. No information or property related to Met Council may be removed from Met Council's premises, including without limitation, documents, files, records, computer files, equipment, office supplies or similar materials except in the ordinary course of performing duties on behalf of Met Council.