



**SHELTER. SUPPORT. SOLUTIONS.**

## **Pillars Volunteer Handbook**

Updated: December 2023

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## Welcome

### Dear Volunteer:

Welcome! We are so excited to have you on board! On behalf of the board of directors, staff, clients, and donors, thank you for volunteering your time with Pillars. I hope that you will find your time here satisfying and fulfilling!

This handbook is full of information about the processes and procedures of volunteering with Pillars. Although we cover many scenarios that may arise while you are volunteering, I urge you ask questions. The more you know about the shelter, services, and expectations, the more comfortable and confident you will be.

I want you to have fun with your volunteer experience with us! Please let me know what I can do for you to ensure that you are comfortable and content in your volunteer role. You can reach me by phone, email, or in-person at the shelter. Feel free to contact me with any questions, comments, or concerns.

Thank you for all that you do for Pillars. We are so happy that you're here!

*Autumn*

Autumn Gomez-Tagle

Volunteer Manager

Email: [agomeztagle@pillarsinc.org](mailto:agomeztagle@pillarsinc.org)

Phone: 920.734.9192 Ext. 125

## **Contact Information**

Matt Malm, Community Engagement  
Director

[mmalm@pillarsinc.org](mailto:mmalm@pillarsinc.org)

920.734.9192 Ext. 123

Stephanie Draheim, Events Coordinator

[sdraheim@pillarsinc.org](mailto:sdraheim@pillarsinc.org)

920.734.9192 Ext. 126

Ann Steenbock, Community Engagement  
Coordinator

[asteenbock@pillarsinc.org](mailto:asteenbock@pillarsinc.org)

920.734.9192 Ext. 146

Alona Boots, Development Manager

[aboots@pillarsinc.org](mailto:aboots@pillarsinc.org)

920.734.9192 Ext. 116

Sadie Olson, Marketing & Communications  
Coordinator

[solson@pillarsinc.org](mailto:solson@pillarsinc.org)

920.734.9192 Ext. 124

## **Pillars Locations**

Pillars Main Office

*605 E. Hancock Street*

*Appleton, WI 54911*

Pillars Adult & Family Shelter

*400 N. Division Street*

*Appleton, WI 54911*

Pillars Adult Shelter

*1928 W. College Avenue*

*Appleton, WI 54914*

Pillars Resource Center

*129 S. Mason Street*

*Appleton, WI 54914*

Ascend

*990 Apple Blossom Drive*

*Neenah, WI 54956*

## Mission

From homelessness to coming home, Pillars provides shelter, support, and solutions to address the housing needs in our community.

## Vision

To lead our community in finding innovative, effective solutions so experiences of homelessness are rare and brief and everyone has a place to call home.

## Values

Respect

Collaboration

Empowerment

Grit

## Overview of Pillars

On October 1, 2018, three legacy organizations - Homeless Connections, Housing Partnership of the Fox Cities, and the Fox Valley Warming Shelter - came together to become Pillars, with a goal to increase our impact in the community by providing services that better meet the needs of individuals and families facing homelessness and challenges to maintaining housing.

Homeless Connections had connected individuals and families to resources that promoted independence and prevented future episodes of homelessness since 1981. A 78-bed shelter was built in 1997 to better serve the needs of our community. In addition to providing shelter, Homeless Connections provided services focused on street outreach, prevention, diversion and housing.

Founded in 1986, Housing Partnership of the Fox Cities worked to enhance the dignity and independence of families by providing quality, affordable homes and exceptional supportive services. Housing programs were created to serve the unique housing needs of various populations: mothers fleeing domestic abuse, individuals who are chronically homeless, young adults, people with disabilities, veterans and others. What started as one home renovated by a group of volunteers grew into an organization that served over 400 individuals annually.

The Fox Valley Warming Shelter, which started as a rotating shelter in 2008, secured a shelter building in 2010. The shelter welcomed adult men and women experiencing homelessness, and the 55-person capacity shelter grew to serve close to 600 individuals a year.

Today, Pillars provides shelter, support and solutions to address the housing needs in our community through a broad range of both crisis housing and stable housing services.

## Introduction

This handbook is in place to make you the best Pillars volunteer that you can be! This handbook will help you understand more about our agency, the clients we serve, and the opportunities you have, to grow within our volunteer program. Pillars aspires to ensure a positive environment built on trust and mutual respect.

This handbook provides general guidelines for volunteer conduct; however, it is not solely inclusive of all circumstances. Pillars believes in open and trusting communications, therefore please reach out to the Volunteer Manager with any questions to ensure prompt resolution.

We depend on you and hope that you have a positive volunteer experience. Please read this handbook carefully and be sure to ask questions. The Volunteer Manager, another staff person, or your volunteer trainer are happy to answer any questions that may arise. The more you know about Pillars and your expectations as a volunteer, the more you will get out of your experience with Pillars.

## Harassment and Discrimination

Pillars is committed to providing an environment where all team members are treated with dignity, decency, and respect. To that end, Pillars will not tolerate bullying, harassment, discrimination, or retaliation. This policy extends to workplace harassment involving non-employees, such as clients, volunteers, or outside vendors. Conduct prohibited by this policy is unacceptable in the workplace and in any work-related setting outside of the workplace, such as during business trips, business meetings and social events, or where there is an impact in the workplace.

Pillars is committed to providing a volunteer environment free from harassment. Harassment because of the individual's race, color, religion, sex, gender, pregnancy, citizenship, national origin, age, disability, military service, veteran status, genetic information, union membership, creed, ancestry, marital status, sexual orientation, honesty testing, arrest/conviction record, use of lawful products or any other status protected by law is unacceptable and will not be tolerated.

**All team members have an obligation to report harassing or inappropriate behavior, whether it is directed at you or is something you saw or heard that was directed at someone else.**

Following a report of harassment, Pillars will promptly investigate and take swift action, as appropriate. Complaints will be handled as discreetly as possible, although absolute confidentiality cannot be guaranteed, since the alleged harasser is entitled to answer the charges, particularly if discipline or termination is a possible outcome. All team members are expected to cooperate fully and honestly during any investigation, regardless of if you are the complaining party, the accused party, or a potential witness.

Pillars will not tolerate any retaliation against any team member who reports an incident of alleged harassment or inappropriate workplace behavior, or provides information during an investigation, and will take measures to protect all such team members from retaliation. Engaging in retaliatory behavior is

a violation of this policy, and is grounds for corrective action, up to and including termination of employment or volunteering.

## Drug and Alcohol-Free Environment

Pillars desires to maintain a healthy and safe environment that is free from improper drug or unauthorized alcohol use. Our policies described below help us promote this goal.

While on Pillars' premises and while conducting business-related activities off premises, no team member may use, possess, distribute, sell, or be under the influence of alcohol, illegal drugs, or any legal drugs (including prescribed drugs) that might cause impairment or impact a team member's ability to perform the functions of their position fully or safely.

## Volunteer/Staff Communication

Your point of contact during your volunteer shift will be the Pillars staff member(s) working at that time. You may refer to them with any concerns or questions while volunteering. The Pillars staff member(s) at that location will also provide day-to-day instructions to volunteers, as needed.

The Volunteer Manager will serve as your main point of communication while not on-site, as well as the facilitator for training, scheduling, and feedback. The Volunteer Manager will also provide communication to volunteers regarding additional notifications, updates, and volunteer needs.

## Mandated Reporting

Pillars team members (including volunteers) are required to report suspected child abuse and neglect that they encounter in the course of their professional duties. Child abuse includes physical abuse, neglect, sexual abuse, and emotional abuse. If a team member has a reasonable suspicion that abuse or neglect occurred or a reasonable belief that a child is threatened with abuse or neglect and that abuse or neglect will occur, a report should be made to Child Protection Services at 920-832-5161. Additional reporting protocol specific to your work site will be provided by the Volunteer Manager.

## Confidentiality

Out of respect for clients and team members and to ensure compliance with the code of conduct, Pillars requires all team members to maintain a high level of confidentiality.

Confidentiality refers to the protection of information that is meant to remain private. In the human services field, the policy of confidentiality serves to encourage clients to speak freely and provide information that they may not normally disclose to a third party. It is only through this free flow of information that our team members can provide the services that our clients may need and deserve.

Confidential information shall mean information which pertains to Pillars, its business, and its clients, and which is not generally known to the public. Volunteers are to hold the names and any personal information of Pillars' clients in the strictest confidence. Inappropriate use of confidential material is sufficient grounds for immediate termination of the volunteer.

Volunteers must stay in areas that are designated for volunteer activities. Do not venture into off-limit areas of your volunteer site, including client bedrooms. When volunteering on-site, we are effectively in our clients' homes – maintaining their privacy is a priority!

Questions regarding confidentiality should be discussed with the Volunteer Manager.

## Acceptable Use (Technology) Policy

As a volunteer, you may receive access to a shared computer in some volunteer roles. Acceptable use of Pillars Information Technology (IT) resources includes any purposes related to the direct or indirect support of Pillars activities, administrative and business purposes. Information Technology (IT) resources include Pillars issued computers, phones, technologies, etc.

When issued resources, team members are expected to exercise care, perform required maintenance, and follow all operating instructions, safety standards, and guidelines. Prompt reporting of damages, defects, and the need for repairs could prevent deterioration of equipment and possible injury to team members or others. Team members are prohibited from installing any personal or any non-agency purchased software on agency computers.

### **Privacy and Security**

Pillars shall take reasonable measures to protect the privacy of its IT resources and accounts assigned to authorized users. However, Pillars cannot guarantee absolute security and privacy. Any activity on Pillars IT resources may be monitored, logged and reviewed by Pillars approved personnel or may be discovered in legal proceedings. Pillars has the right to employ appropriate security measures, to investigate as needed, and to take necessary actions to protect Pillars IT resources. Pillars may also have a duty to provide information relevant to ongoing investigations by law enforcement.

Failure to adhere to the provisions noted above may result in the suspension or loss of access to IT resources and may be grounds for corrective action, up to and including termination from the Pillars volunteer program.

## Volunteer Eligibility

- Pillars reserves the right to refuse volunteer opportunities to any individual or group. Pillars also reserves the right to revoke acceptance as a volunteer for a specific department or activity and/or dissolve a volunteer's status with Pillars at any time.
- All volunteers at Pillars must attend volunteer orientation before beginning their volunteer experience. We do not accept walk-in volunteers.



- Pillars clients are eligible to volunteer after one year has passed since last receiving services from Pillars.
- Pillars clients that are participating in Supportive or Stable Housing programs may be eligible to volunteer at the Adult Shelter or Adult & Family Shelter on a case-by-case basis.
- Volunteers must be 18 years or older to volunteer at the Adult Shelter or Resource Center. We can accommodate minors as volunteers at the Adult & Family Shelter and we recommend a minimum age of 7 to volunteer there. Youth volunteers 17 and under must be always accompanied by an adult and/or be part of an organized group with adequate supervision.
- Individuals referred to Pillars for court-mandated volunteer service may volunteer at Pillars Adult Shelter, Resource Center, and Stable/Supportive Housing maintenance programs. If an individual is under 18 and is referred for court-mandated volunteer service, Pillars will offer other options dependent on the cause for court-mandated volunteer service.
- All volunteers at Pillars Adult & Family Shelter must consent to a background check through the State of Wisconsin.
- Volunteers accept personal responsibility for their actions and understand that failure to abide by these policies and procedures may result in termination of volunteer services.

## Volunteer Boundaries

Boundaries are in place to protect our clients and our volunteers. Violating any of the following, will result in disciplinary action or termination from the Pillars volunteer program.

- Maintain respectful boundaries with clients. If you know a client from outside the shelter, allow them to acknowledge you first.
- Do not give out personal information (including your address, phone number, or other personal or identifying information) or ask clients for their personal information.
- Never offer rides or special favors to clients outside of your assigned volunteer responsibilities.
- Never give money or gifts directly to clients. If you are interested in helping an individual, family, or the shelter, please contact the Development Manager.
- Volunteers may not take any donated items from Pillars facilities.
- Never discipline or punish any of the children staying at the Pillars Adult & Family Shelter.
- Do not have physical contact with clients including, but not limited to hugging, touching, picking up, or showing other forms of affection to clients and/or children.
- Never ask clients for money or personal items.
- Never take pictures or videos of clients.

## Social Media

Social media, in all its forms, is a great tool that people use every day to communicate, share information and educate others. Pillars appreciates its team members contributing to our social media activities by suggesting timely content to the Community Engagement Team and having conversations about Pillars following the guidelines of this policy and other personnel policies. Being a good ambassador online is much like being a good ambassador for Pillars when you are in the community.

As a Pillars team member, we ask that you follow these guidelines while using social media:

- If you wish to discuss Pillars programs or mission on social media, please disclose that you are a volunteer with the organization. Be kind, respectful, and be aware that your tone may be interpreted in different ways by your readers.
- Any official Pillars Facebook posts may be shared to your personal page if you so choose.
- Stories and photos are an important part of sharing the mission of Pillars, however, we ask that you do not use any identifying information that could breach the confidentiality of clients, fellow volunteers, or staff persons with Pillars. Identifying information can be, but is not limited to, a person's name, likeness, occupation, description, or family composition. As a volunteer, you are committing to maintaining the confidentiality of the clients we serve.
- Photos and video that contain clients or any identifying client information are prohibited (from being taken, not just shared on social media). When in doubt, ask a staff person for clarification on when and where you may take photos while volunteering.
- Obtain permission from other volunteers who may appear in photos, prior to using them for social media or other public appearances.
- Unless given express consent, do not act as a spokesperson or make official endorsements or requests for assistance from the community on behalf of Pillars.

With any social media activity, exercise accuracy and transparency, do not use any Pillars logos or trademarks without consent, be respectful, avoid offensive language and do not reveal confidential information about fellow team members, clients, or Pillars as a whole. You are responsible for your online comments and are expected to be respectful to Pillars, fellow team members, clients, and competitors.

## Transporting Clients

Volunteers in certain volunteer roles may transport clients for specific reasons provided in their volunteer role description. Pillars vehicles must always be used for the transportation of clients. Volunteers are not allowed to offer rides to clients outside of their volunteer responsibilities. Doing so will result in disciplinary action or termination from the Pillars volunteer program.

## Volunteer Role Descriptions

Pillars maintains an outline of volunteer role responsibilities to identify the requirements and expectations, the essential functions, for each role. Volunteer role descriptions are included in the Volunteer Manual at each site.

## Scheduling & Cancellations

Pillars volunteers use VolunteerHub (online website) to schedule themselves for a specific volunteer role for which they have been trained.

If volunteers are committed to a regular schedule, the Volunteer Manager will add the assigned dates/times to the VolunteerHub calendar. If a change needs to be made to a volunteer's regular schedule, notify the Volunteer Manager.

Volunteers are required to sign in and out when volunteering. This information is used by Pillars for statistical and fundraising purposes.

Volunteers play a vital role in our agency, and we are grateful for the time you donate to us! If you need to cancel your scheduled volunteer time, please cancel your shift through VolunteerHub at least 24 hours in advance. The sooner you cancel, the better chance we have of filling your shift. If you need to cancel within 24 hours of your shift, please cancel your shift through VolunteerHub, contact the Volunteer Manager, and notify the location you were scheduled to volunteer at. If you are ill, please do not volunteer. We value your dedication, but we also value your health.

Let the Volunteer Manager know if you are willing to be listed on an on-call list. The on-call list is a list of volunteers who are willing to be called on short notice due to a cancellation or last-minute need.

## Volunteer Breaks & Food/Drink Policy

Since most volunteer shifts are 2 – 3 hours, we ask that you limit the breaks that you take during your shift. Smoking is permitted in designated areas. If you smoke, please have a staff member direct you to designated smoking areas. All locations have a staff/volunteer bathroom that is separate from client bathrooms. If you need to use the bathroom, please ask a staff member for the key and location. If you do step away from your volunteer station, make sure there is another volunteer or staff member there to cover your work.

Volunteers are welcome to coffee, tea, and other beverages that are available on site. Volunteers are welcome to eat whatever meal or snack is being served while on shift. Kitchen volunteers should be sure to eat their meal or snack outside of the kitchen and wash their hands before re-entering the food service area. Volunteers should confirm with staff that there is enough dinner for all clients who are eating at the shelter before serving themselves.

## Volunteer Performance Feedback

Pillars will not provide formal performance evaluations. We encourage all staff and clients to express their gratitude and feedback to volunteers directly. If you don't receive verbal appreciation for your work each time you volunteer, know that the volunteering you do makes a huge impact for our staff and clients! THANK YOU!

Staff are also encouraged to address any concerns about your performance in the moment. In the event of a concern regarding your performance, you can expect a timely, constructive conversation with the Volunteer Manager, including an opportunity to share your thoughts and understanding of the situation.

## Additional Training

Pillars recognizes that the skills and knowledge of its volunteers are critical to the success of the organization. Therefore, additional training opportunities may be offered to a volunteer, but are not required.

## Volunteer Injury

All volunteers must sign an individual or group waiver before volunteering. In summary (not inclusive), the waiver releases Pillars from all liability claims. Pillars does not assume any responsibility to provide volunteers with financial or other assistance like benefits or insurance. Volunteers also release Pillars from any claim which arises from first-aid treatment or other medical services in connection with an emergency while acting as a volunteer at Pillars.

If you are injured while volunteering at Pillars, please call emergency services (as needed) first. At your earliest convenience, please contact the staff person at your volunteer location to notify them of your injury (even minor). If you need emergency services and unable to call yourself, staff will call for you. If you are transported off-site or your injury prevents you from volunteering in the future, please also contact the Volunteer Manager, when possible.

## Safety Procedures

We value the safety of our volunteers, clients, and staff members, and for this reason we ask that you familiarize yourself with our safety procedures:

- Always know your surroundings and be able to identify emergency exits in case of a fire.
- Familiarize yourself with emergency procedures and panic buttons (located in site/role specific volunteer manuals). Ask a staff person what the protocol is per location if you need clarification.
- If you ever feel that a call needs to be placed to 911 due to a medical emergency or immediate threat, you do not need permission from staff. Please proceed with the call and give the dispatcher as much information as you can. Notify staff after you've completed your call.
- Follow all rules and instructions given by the group leader, on-site staff, or Volunteer Manager, especially when working around items that may cause a hazard: kitchen appliances, slippery surfaces, power tools, ladders, etc.
- Pillars is not responsible for any lost, damaged, or stolen items; please leave personal or valuable items at home when volunteering.

Failure to comply with the safety protocol laid out by Pillars may result in disciplinary action or termination from the Pillars volunteer program.

## Personal Appearance & Dress Code

Dress, grooming, and personal cleanliness standards contribute to the morale of all team members and affect the business image Pillars presents to customers and visitors.

Volunteers are expected to present a clean, neat, and tasteful appearance. Casual clothing is allowed (you can be both casual and professional at the same time). Please do not wear any inappropriate propaganda (beer, alcohol, violent related materials, etc.). Additionally, do not wear any clothing that is too revealing or short (for example, all shirts must cover the midriff). Certain positions may have specific guidelines that must be followed, such as closed toe shoes required or tying back long hair when working in the kitchen, which will be communicated to you by the Volunteer Manager.

## Questions/Concerns

We urge you to ask a lot of questions! The more you know about Pillars services and expectations, the more comfortable and confident you will be. We also value your suggestions and comments – together we make a great team. Any questions regarding volunteer service may be addressed to the staff member at the site. If a volunteer feels uncomfortable doing so, questions or concerns may be addressed to the Volunteer Manager. All questions/concerns will be promptly investigated. If this does not generate a satisfactory response, volunteers have the option of expressing their concerns to the Community Engagement Director.

We hope you are involved in a position where you feel valued and satisfied. If you are not happy with your position or would like to explore other areas of volunteering for the shelter, please talk with the Volunteer Manager. There are many volunteer opportunities available, and we want you to feel satisfied with the service you provide to our organization.

## Exit Interview

If you are no longer able to volunteer with Pillars, we ask that you notify us in writing so we may set up a time to host an exit interview with you. We want the opportunity to thank you for your service and find out what you liked about our volunteer program and the ways in which we can improve the current program.

## Volunteer Memorandum of Understanding

*In this document, you'll see what you can expect from Pillars as an organization, what we expect of you as a volunteer, and what you can expect of the clients you are working with.*

### **As the ORGANIZATION, we agree to accept the services of volunteers and commit:**

- To provide adequate and continuous communication, training, and assistance so that our volunteers will be able to meet the responsibilities of their positions with confidence.
- To ensure diligent supervisory aid to volunteers.
- To offer the volunteer careful placement and an opportunity to change assignments on a prescribed basis.
- To respect the skills, dignity, and individual needs of volunteers, and to do our best to adjust to these individual requirements.
- To treat as equal partners with agency staff, both jointly responsible for completion of their respective goals and the organization's mission.

### **Our CLIENTS have the following expectations regarding volunteers:**

- To respect staff, volunteers, guests, and other clients. Swearing or offensive remarks are not acceptable.
- To honor other people's confidentiality and maintain appropriate boundaries.
- To actively supervise children (if parents) while in shelter.
- To not have pornographic material, weapons, drugs, and alcohol on the property.
- To complete assigned chores while in shelter (may interact with volunteers when completing chores).

### **As the VOLUNTEER, I agree to serve as a volunteer and commit:**

- To perform assigned duties without compensation and that, in performing these services, I acknowledge that I am not acting as an employee of Pillars, Inc.
- To adhere to the organization's policies and procedures, including record-keeping requirements as well as the confidentiality of agency- and client-information.
- Volunteers act as representatives of Pillars and are expected to approach clients' needs with compassion, sensitivity, and without judgement.
- To perform my duties in good spirit and to the best of my abilities, and to seek guidance when in doubt.
- To respect paid staff and strive to maintain a smooth working relationship with staff and other volunteers.
- To meet time and duty commitments, or to provide adequate notice so that alternate arrangements can be made.