



Volunteer Handbook

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www.BrighterDaysTX.org

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Message from our CEO



Welcome to Brighter Days (formerly Rainbow Days)! For over 40 years, volunteers have been a valuable resource for our staff and the children we serve. We rely on engaged supporters like you to help us accomplish our mission *to empower children facing adversity to develop healthy skills, break negative cycles, and create opportunities for a promising future.*

This Volunteer Handbook will help you have the best possible experience as a volunteer. It answers frequently asked questions and gives information about our policies and your role. We also invite you to explore our website, www.BrighterDaysTX.org, to learn more about our clients, programs, curriculum and events. Brighter Days' Volunteer Coordinator can answer most of your other questions, but please feel free to contact me directly should you need additional assistance.

Thank you for your generous gift of time and energy. We are so grateful you have chosen to volunteer with us. You are making a difference to children in need and helping kids rise above!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tiffany Beaudine".

Tiffany Beaudine

CEO

TiffanyB@BrighterDaysTX.org

Volunteer Application/Approval Process

Volunteer Application

The first step for an individual who desires to volunteer with Brighter Days, and the children we serve, is to complete a Volunteer Application AND undergo a Criminal Background Check before volunteering. Background checks are not required for minors under 18 years of age. Background checks are also not required for office-only projects.

Upon completion of the Volunteer application, which can be found [HERE](#) or on the volunteer tab of our website, you will be sent a separate email containing a link to fill out a background check questionnaire through VolunteerNow's veriFYI system. The background check is strictly screening for criminal offenses and does not include a credit check of any kind. If you have any questions or concerns regarding the background check process you may contact VolunteerNow directly at 214-818-9839 or contact Sunni Roaten, Senior Director of Volunteers at 214-887-0726. You can also send Sunni an e-mail with questions at SunniR@BrighterDaysTX.org

ALL volunteers, 18 years and older, MUST complete a criminal background check before working with the children we serve.

Completion of this application and the background check does not guarantee that an individual will be selected as a volunteer. Volunteers will be selected at the sole discretion of Rainbow Days.

Please complete this form at least 7 days before you desire to volunteer. You will not be able to volunteer with the children we serve until your CBC has cleared.

Please Note: If you have filled out a volunteer application with us and have continued your placement for over two years it is our policy to re-run criminal background checks on returning volunteers every 2 years. Brighter Days also reserves the right to run a background check at any time that the volunteer is active and working directly with children.

Criminal Background Checks

For direct-service volunteers, Brighter Days will obtain the results of a statewide criminal background check from the Department of Public Safety via VolunteerNow's veriFYI system.

All criminal background check results will be kept confidential. Any negative findings will be reviewed by the Brighter Days CEO, who will determine the appropriate course of action. If it is deemed that you are unable to volunteer with us, you will be contacted by the Director of Volunteers or CEO directly. If you do not hear anything from us, then you are good to volunteer.

Disqualifying Offenses

A person **may not volunteer** for direct service with children who have been convicted of any disqualifying offenses, been on probation or received deferred adjudication for any disqualifying offense. Also, a person may not serve with children that have presently pending any criminal charges of any disqualifying offenses before determination of guilt is made.

Disqualifying offenses are:

1. Felonies or misdemeanors classified as an offense against the person or family or involves an offense against the person or family.
 - a. Offenses against the person include, but not limited to murder, assault, sexual assault, injury to a child, and abandoning or endangering a child.
 - b. Offenses against the family include, but not limited to bigamy, incest, and interference with child custody, enticing a child or harboring a runaway child.
2. Felonies or misdemeanors classified as an offense against public order or indecency.
 - a. Offenses against public order and decency include, but are not limited to prostitution, obscenity, and sexual performance by a child, possession or promotion of child pornography, and disorderly conduct.
3. A felony or misdemeanor violation of any law intended to control the possession or distribution of any substance including a controlled substance in the Texas Controlled Substances Act. Driving Under Influence (DUI) or Driving While Intoxicated (DWI) is **not** a disqualifying offense.

Brighter Days retains the right to disqualify a volunteer for other offenses not listed herein on a case-by-case basis.

Volunteer Policies

Drug Free Environment

Brighter Days is committed to maintaining a drug-free environment. Volunteers will not distribute, dispense, possess, use, or be under the influence of any of the following substances while at Brighter Days offices or at any Brighter Days-related activities:

1. Any controlled substance or dangerous drug as defined by law, including but not limited to marijuana, any narcotic drug, hallucinogen, stimulant, depressant, amphetamine, or barbiturate.
2. Alcohol or any alcoholic beverage.
3. Any usable glue, aerosol paint, or any other chemical substance for inhalation.
4. Any other intoxicant, or mood-changing, mind-altering, or behavior-altering drugs.

A volunteer need not be legally intoxicated to be considered “under the influence” of a controlled substance. A volunteer who uses a drug authorized by a licensed physician through a prescription specifically for that volunteer’s use will not be considered to have violated this policy.

Smoking and Tobacco Usage

The use of tobacco and nicotine products, including vaping, is prohibited at Brighter Days' offices, program sites, at all Brighter Days events and programs, and in the presence of children and youth participants. Volunteers will not provide, distribute, or facilitate participant access to nicotine-products.

Personal Appearance / Dress Code

Suggested apparel for volunteer activities are shorts (walking length), jeans or comfortable pants and **closed-toed shoes (like tennis shoes)**. No tank tops, cropped tops, short shorts, t-shirts with political affiliations, inappropriate pictures or slogans or open-toe shoes are permitted when working with children. Additionally, we may request that piercings (beyond women's pierced ears) may be covered depending on the event. If a service site has a stricter dress code, then the site dress code will be followed.

Youth Volunteers

Youth volunteers, ages 12-17, are allowed to volunteer ONLY if they are accompanied by an Adult Chaperone. The Adult Chaperone is expected to stay with the youth they are accompanying throughout the duration of the volunteer placement. Youth volunteers are expected to demonstrate a positive attitude, mature behavior, and diligent work ethic at all times. Please read our 'Children and Youth Volunteer Policy' in its entirety before signing up any minor to volunteer.

Safety

Brighter Days takes the safety of the program participants and volunteers seriously and goes to great lengths to make sure that all areas of our events are safe and secure to prevent injury. In the case that any injury occurs to you, another volunteer, or a child / youth in attendance at a Brighter Days event, please notify the Brighter Days CEO, Camp Director or Director of Volunteers immediately so that an incident report can be completed, and the proper care can be taken to those injured.

Child Contact

Brighter Days recruits caring, educated and nurturing staff members and volunteers and it is of primary importance for both staff and volunteers to provide a safe environment for children. It is Brighter Days' policy to protect children and youth from inappropriate touches, inappropriate physical contact, and inappropriate relationships while in the care of Brighter Days.

No volunteer is ever to be alone with a child. If a child needs to be escorted to use the restroom or to go to the nurse or camp office, then groups are required. There must be at least two children present per volunteer at all times.

Brighter Days also strives to protect its employees and volunteers through education on appropriate touches and practicing caution. All Brighter Days volunteers will recognize and respect the rights of children and families, as established by local, state, and federal laws.

Volunteers are asked to refrain from personal contact with a child – this includes direct contact via email and/or cell phone, Facebook or any social media. Volunteers will not give gifts or money to clients without prior approval from Brighter Days.

Appropriate physical contact includes touches over which a **child has control**. For example, Brighter Days staff and volunteers may hug a child with a side hug **only** when the child initiates the hug. Infants, toddlers, and pre-school children may be carried at events if given permission by the parent(s) or a guardian and must be in the presence of BDI staff. **For all ages, but especially youth ages 5 and above high fives and fist bumps are appropriate forms of reciprocal physical contact.**

Volunteers will refrain from **inappropriate touching**, which includes lap sitting, front-to-front hugs, kisses, back rubs or massages, piggy-back rides, swinging kids by wrists or ankles, and rides on shoulders.

Reporting of Child Abuse

Brighter Days, Inc. shall comply with the provisions of state law as set forth in Chapter 261 of the Texas Family Code relating to reporting suspected child abuse and the provisions of the Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS) policy. Brighter Days' staff shall respond to disclosures or suspicions of abuse of minors by reporting to appropriate agencies as required by law.

Procedure

1. Any staff, contractor, or volunteer of Brighter Days, who has any reason to suspect that a child receiving program services is the victim of abuse or neglect as defined by Chapter 261 of the Texas Family Code, is required to report the allegation to the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services within 48 hours of first suspecting abuse or neglect. By law, staff, contractors, or volunteers of Brighter Days. may not delegate the duty to report to another person or entity or rely on another person or entity to make the report.
2. Staff, contractors and volunteers who have direct contact with children and youth are briefed on recognizing symptoms of child abuse and neglect and the policy and procedure for reporting abuse.

Procedure for Reporting

1. State law requires anyone that suspects child abuse or neglect to report these suspicions to the Texas Department of Family & Protective Service (DFPS). A person who suspects child abuse or neglect, but fails to report it, can be charged with a misdemeanor or state jail felony. Remember, reporting suspected child abuse or neglect makes it possible for a child to get help.
2. There are two ways to report abuse. Call the abuse hotline 1-800-252-5400 toll-free, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, nationwide or make your report through the secure website www.txabusehotline.org. Note: the internet reporting system is for non-urgent situations. When you make a report, you will be asked to provide your name and contact information. Any person making a report to DFPS is immune from civil or criminal liability if the report is made in good faith. The reporter's

name is also confidential and will not be provided directly to the accused person by any DFPS employee.

3. The law requires that the following information, if known, be reported:
 - a. name and address of minor;
 - b. name and address of the minor's parent or person responsible for the care, custody, or welfare of the child if not the parent; and any other pertinent information concerning the alleged or suspected abuse, such as the child's school, name and age of the alleged abuser, and description of the child's condition or injury.
 - c. The Intake Specialist will ask you to explain your concerns and might ask additional questions to determine if the situation that you describe meets the Texas Family Codes' definition of abuse or neglect.
 - d. Once an Intake Specialist processes your report, you will receive a confirmation email with a Call Identification Number. This email will also tell you whether your report was forwarded to the local DFPS office for further investigation. Please email this report to the appropriate Brighter Days' Program Director. If possible, please get the caseworker's name.

Note: Since some of the information needed might not be known to the volunteer, the Program Director and Volunteer can make the call together and can talk you through the reporting process.

Per BDI policy, an incident report will be taken from the volunteer including observations and a report of what was witnessed and/or concerns and a recording of when the volunteer will call and report. This information will also be shared with the site of where the family is living.

Sexual Harassment

Sexual harassment is any verbal or physical conduct that denigrates or shows hostility or aversion toward an individual because of his or her gender and that:

1. Has the purpose or effect of creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive working environment; or
2. Has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's work performance; or
3. Otherwise adversely affects an individual's employment opportunities.
4. Brighter Days volunteers will not engage in sexual harassment of any adult in which they come in contact with while serving as a Brighter Days volunteer.

Harassing conduct includes (1) epithets, slurs, negative stereotyping, or threatening, intimidating, or hostile acts that relate to gender and (2) written or graphic material that denigrates or shows hostility or aversion toward an individual or group because of gender and that is placed on walls, bulletin boards, or elsewhere on Brighter Days premises.

Brighter Days volunteers will not engage in sexual harassment of any kind. Examples of sexual harassment include activities such as engaging in sexually oriented conversations, telephoning a child at home or elsewhere to solicit unwelcome social relationships, physical contact that would reasonably be construed as sexual in nature

and threatening or enticing children to engage in sexual behavior in exchange for gifts or other benefits. In considering allegations that a volunteer has sexually harassed a child there is a presumption that the conduct was unwelcome. Sexual Harassment is a form of discrimination and is strictly prohibited.

Brighter Days or their agents shall investigate all allegations of sexual harassment and officials will take prompt and appropriate disciplinary action against volunteers found to engage in conduct constituting sexual harassment.

In order for any action to be considered sexual harassment, it must be unwelcome. If a volunteer believes that he/she is being sexually harassed, the volunteer must let the person know that the comments or actions are unwelcome.

Volunteer Service Records

The reporting and recording of volunteer hours may seem like busy work or a bother, but it has REAL VALUE. When an accurate account is maintained, we increase our ability to have on-going, consistent, and effective volunteer programs. It also helps to locate and identify volunteers for specific services. Personally, for the volunteer, keeping a record of hours worked can directly benefit a person as a valued record of community involvement, responsibility and dedication.

Each volunteer is asked to complete and submit Brighter Days volunteer time sheets for in-office volunteering and take-home projects (see attachment). At events, volunteers are asked to sign in and out at the Volunteer Check-in table. Board Members and Group Facilitators are asked to report their hours to their staff Director.

Thank you for your time and service to Brighter Days! Brighter Days strives to have a warm, engaging and friendly environment for our volunteers, and we know you will enjoy volunteering with us!

***If you have any questions about Volunteering with Brighter Days, please contact:
Sunni Roaten, Senior Director of Operations and Volunteers, at 214-214-3833 or
SunniR@BrighterDaysTX.org***



VOLUNTEER TIME SHEET

Name: _____

Email: _____

Phone: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Date	Time In	Time Out	Total Hours	Volunteer Activity	Direct Service (work w/ children)	Admin. Support (office/clerical)	Staff Approved

I acknowledge that the information listed in this time sheet is true and accurate.

Signature: _____

Date: _____