



**WOMEN'S  
EMPOWERMENT**

# **Volunteer Handbook**

1590 North A Street  
Sacramento, CA 95811  
(916) 669-2307  
[www.womens-empowerment.org](http://www.womens-empowerment.org)

# Welcome to Women's Empowerment

Dear Volunteer,

Welcome to Women's Empowerment! We are delighted that you have chosen to volunteer your time with us. We understand that your time is precious and we are honored that you are willing to spend some of it with us. Each and every day our agency depends on volunteers like you to ensure that we operate efficiently and successfully. Volunteers at Women's Empowerment do everything from teach our classes and mentor program participants to plan our events and sort through donations. In short, Women's Empowerment could not operate without dedicated volunteers like you.

The Volunteer Handbook provides answers to many of the questions you may have about the volunteer programs we offer. It covers policies and procedures, and our mutual responsibilities. You are responsible for reading and understanding the Volunteer Handbook, and for adhering to Women's Empowerment policies and procedures. If anything is unclear, please discuss the matter with the Community Partnerships Coordinator.

Again, on behalf of our staff and everyone here at Women's Empowerment, we welcome you to our volunteer program. Thank you for taking time to help us end the cycle of homelessness, one woman at a time.

Sincerely,



Lisa Culp  
Executive Director



Michelle Adcock  
Volunteer Manager



KT O'Connor  
Community Partnerships Coordinator



# Table of Contents

Purpose of This Handbook .....	4
Mission, Vision & History .....	5
Volunteer Expectations .....	6
Volunteering with Women’s Empowerment .....	7
<i>The Orientation Process</i> .....	7
<i>Positions</i> .....	8
Volunteer Policies & Procedures .....	9
Contact Information .....	15
Volunteer Agreement .....	16



## **Purpose of This Handbook**

This handbook has been produced to help you become a better Women's Empowerment volunteer. This book will share with you a little of our history, philosophy, practices, and policies as well as all the benefits we will provide to you as a valued volunteer.

No volunteer handbook can answer all the questions you might have about our program. It is in our volunteer orientation that we can better get to know each other, express our views, and volunteer together in a harmonious relationship.

We hope this Handbook will allow you to feel comfortable with us. We depend on you – your success is our success. Please don't hesitate to ask questions. Your Volunteer Manager will gladly answer them. We believe you will enjoy your volunteer work and your fellow volunteers here. We also believe you will find Women's Empowerment a great place to volunteer.

We ask that you read this Handbook carefully, and refer to it whenever questions arise. We also suggest that you take it home so your family can become familiar with Women's Empowerment and our policies.



# Mission, Vision & History

## Mission Statement

The mission of Women's Empowerment is to educate and empower women who are homeless with the skills and confidence necessary to get a job, maintain a healthy lifestyle, and regain a home for themselves and their children.

## History

Located in Sacramento, California, Women's Empowerment's mission was created by homeless women expressing their needs and a community coming together with the desire to end homelessness—for good.

Our executive director and founder, Lisa Culp, was working at Sacramento Loaves & Fishes when the idea formed. Lisa watched homeless mothers raising their children on the streets. She watched those children grow up, still homeless, to become mothers of new babies born into homelessness. She knew there must be a solution to this cycle of poverty.

Working with focus groups at Loaves & Fishes, Lisa listened to women share their stories and their needs. In 2001, she worked with community leaders to create Women's Empowerment, which proved to be an immediately successful solution in ending the cycle of poverty.

In 2004, Women's Empowerment became an independent 501(c)(3) nonprofit. Since then, the team has grown to include a board and staff with deep knowledge of the homeless community's needs, and hundreds of volunteer teachers and mentors—all of whom donate countless hours of their time to ensuring that homeless women successfully rise out of poverty.

Since our inception, Women's Empowerment has served more than 1,450 women and more than 3,500 children. In 2016, 92% of women regained a safe home for their children and 81% of women secured a job or enrolled in school/training.

In May 2009, we were named Nonprofit of the Year by the Nonprofit Resource Center. This is one of the highest honors a nonprofit can receive in the Sacramento region.

In 2014, Women's Empowerment was awarded *Organization of the Year* at the inaugural Women's Appreciation Awards by Congresswoman Doris Matsui, Senate President pro Tem Darrell Steinberg and Assembly Member Roger Dickinson.

In 2015, Women's Empowerment was featured on The Today Show's "Hope To It" as a national model to end homelessness.

In 2016, we were featured on CNN's *Impact Your World* as a national model to end homelessness.

In 2017 Assembly Member Kevin McCarty named Women's Empowerment a California nonprofit of the year.



# Volunteer Expectations

## What You Can Expect from Women's Empowerment

- Respectfulness of your commitment, time & confidentiality
- To be part of a team
- Ongoing support from everyone on the WE Staff
- An inclusive, welcoming culture
- To be recognized and appreciated for your work
- The right to say no to projects and tasks that make you uncomfortable

Women's Empowerment is an inclusive, supportive organization where volunteers can expect to be treated with respect. We respect your valuable time and commitment to our program, as well as your right to confidentiality as a volunteer.

## What Women's Empowerment Expects From You

- Honor your commitment to our program
- Cooperate with the WE staff and fellow volunteers
- Be prompt and reliable
- Notify us of any changes to your commitment as a volunteer
- Keep all communications with or concerning the women in our program confidential
- Maintain a respectful relationship with students/graduates

Our expectations are more clearly outlined in the Policies & Procedures section of this guide on page 9.



# Volunteering with Women's Empowerment

## *The Orientation Process*

1. Attend Volunteer Orientation
2. Complete Volunteer Information Form
3. Complete Volunteer Agreement Form
4. Send in Livescan Results  
[Childcare Only]
5. Submit copy of valid drivers license and proof of auto insurance  
[Drivers Only]
6. Start volunteering!



# Volunteering with Women's Empowerment

## Positions

There are a variety of opportunities to volunteer your time and skills at Women's Empowerment. All of our programs are supported by volunteers. Volunteers teach and aid in our classes, mentor program participants, and help with day-to-day operations. If you have a question about who you should be reporting to, contact the Community Partnerships Coordinator and they will direct you to the appropriate staff.

Below is a summary list of the volunteer opportunities available. We also offer limited internship opportunities and additional opportunities to meet organizational needs. Contact the Community Partnerships Coordinator for more information.

### Volunteer Positions

- Career Mentor
- Program Workshop/Classroom Assistant
- Childcare Assistant
- Volunteer Receptionists
- Clothing Closet Attendant
- Thrift Store Driver
- Teacher/Facilitator/Workshop Instructor
- Ambassador/Fundraising
- Special Events/3rd Party Events
- WELL Facilitator

Volunteer opportunities are emailed to volunteers regularly as we have new sessions and events. Please check email folders to ensure you are receiving emails. To sign up for opportunities use the forms linked in the email, or contact the Community Partnerships Coordinator.





# Volunteer Policies & Procedures

As a new volunteer, it will take time to adjust to your new surroundings and the way things operate here at Women's Empowerment. This Handbook is designed to help you adjust to your new role here and answer questions about the policies, procedures and expectations here at Women's Empowerment.

## **Absences & Lateness**

Volunteers are critical to Women's Empowerment's mission. If you cannot make your volunteer shift for whatever reason please notify our staff as soon as possible.

Volunteer can contact the following individuals:

KT O'Connor  
Community Partnerships Coordinator  
916-669-2307 Ext 104  
kt@womens-empowerment.org

## **Attendance**

Sign-in time sheets help us track your volunteer hours. Please sign in when you begin your volunteer service and sign-out when you are finished. At the Women's Empowerment center, sign-in sheets are located at reception desk. For volunteer service outside of the Women's Empowerment center, please work with the Community Partnerships Coordinator to ensure your hours are tracked properly.

## **Background Checks**

Volunteers that will be working with children are required to get a criminal history background check prior to volunteering. If a criminal history is present, offenses will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis as works best for the agency.

## **Confidential Information**

We have an obligation to our clients to maintain their confidentiality and respect their privacy. Every client served by Women's Empowerment has the right to confidentiality. That being said, however, every volunteer must use his or her best judgment. If you are aware of a client issue that requires immediate help, please inform the Community Partnerships Coordinator.

As you work with the staff, information of a confidential matter may be shared with you. You must not share this information with anyone who does not have a professional right or need to know it. This applies to making copies of any Women's Empowerment records, reports or documents without prior approval. Release of any confidential information to unauthorized persons can result in dismissal from your service.



**Dress Code**

Women's Empowerment has a casual dress code, but we ask that your attire be neat and conservative. If staff feels your attire is out of place, you may be asked to change into proper attire.

**Driving**

Volunteers whose work required operation of a motor vehicle must present and maintain a valid driver's license. You will be asked to submit a copy of your driving record and automotive insurance to Women's Empowerment from time to time.

**Equal Volunteering Opportunity**

Women's Empowerment provides equal volunteering opportunity for everyone regardless of age, sex, color, race, creed, national origin, religious persuasion, marital status, sexual orientation, political belief, or disability that does not prohibit performance of essential job functions. All matters relating to volunteering are based upon ability to perform the job, as well as dependability and reliability.

**Exit Interviews**

In instances where a volunteer voluntarily leaves, Women's Empowerment would like to discuss your reasons for leaving and any other impressions the volunteer may have about Women's Empowerment. If you decide to leave, you will be asked to grant us the privilege of an exit interview. We hope that the interview will help us part friends, as well as provide insight into possible improvements. All information will be kept strictly confidential and will in no way affect any references that Women's Empowerment will provide to another agency.

**Expense Reimbursement**

You must have the Community Partnerships Coordinator's written authorization prior to incurring any expense on behalf of Women's Empowerment. To be reimbursed for all authorized expenses, you must submit an expense report accompanied by receipts and approved by your Community Partnerships Coordinator.

**Feedback**

An efficient, successful operation and satisfied volunteers go hand in hand. Volunteer grievances are of concern to Women's Empowerment, regardless of whether the problems are large or small.

In order to provide for prompt and efficient evaluation of, and response to, grievances, Women's Empowerment has established a Feedback Procedure for all volunteers. It will always be Women's Empowerment's policy to give full consideration to every volunteer's opinion. There will be no discrimination against or toward anyone for his or her part in presenting grievances.



Under this policy, a grievance is defined as any event, condition, rule, or practice which the volunteer believes violates his or her civil rights, treats him or her unfairly, or causes him or her any degree of unpleasantness or unhappiness on the job. A grievance may also deal with an attitude, a statement, or an opinion held by a manager or volunteer.

The Feedback Procedure is as follows:

*1. Address your Community Partnerships Coordinator*

If you feel that any volunteering condition, policy, practice, or action by Women's Empowerment is unjust, you should tell your Volunteer Manager about it and discuss the matter confidentially and in private with him or her. If for some reason your Volunteer Manager fails to offer you the opportunity to discuss the matter, or if the discussion does not lead to a satisfactory conclusion, then proceed to the next step.

*2. Meet with the Development Manager*

Your Community Partnerships Coordinator's immediate supervisor, the Development Manager, will review the grievance and ask you to meet with him or her. At this meeting, you should feel free to openly discuss your complaint and substantiate your reasons for feeling the way you do. In most cases, the matter will usually be resolved at this stage.

*3. Meet with the board*

Following the meeting with our executive director, if you are still displeased with the decision rendered, you should bring the problem directly to our Board. The problem will be discussed with all concerned and a final decision rendered. The Board's decision will be binding on all. The sole purpose of this Feedback Procedure is to give each volunteer and Women's Empowerment a chance to clear up any problem, complaint, friction, or grievance.

**Gifts, Tips, & Soliciting**

Occasionally, volunteers will receive gifts from students/graduates. In general, it is okay to accept cards and other gifts that are under \$10. Be sure to use your best judgment when determining whether or not it is appropriate to accept any gift. Any questions regarding gifts should be directed to the Community Partnerships Coordinator.

When volunteering your time with Women's Empowerment, we ask that you refrain from soliciting any political and religious beliefs. While some of our clients are very religious, we ask that you maintain a personal yet professional relationship with them throughout your time as a volunteer. We ask that you do not solicit your own business enterprise or any other private charities.

**Identification**

While volunteering with Women's Empowerment, we ask that you wear a name badge to identify yourself as a volunteer.



**Parking**

Volunteers can utilize the parking lot at our office, as well as the parking along North A Street. Safety Monitors can help answer any questions regarding parking at our office.

**Personal Phone Calls**

In an effort to keep costs down, please keep personal phone calls to a minimum. Phone calls pertaining to your volunteer service are certainly allowed.

**Resignation**

While we hope both you and Women's Empowerment will mutually benefit from your continued volunteering, we realize that it may become necessary for you to leave your job with Women's Empowerment. If you anticipate having to resign your position with Women's Empowerment, you are expected to notify your Community Partnerships Coordinator in writing as far in advance as possible and make arrangements for an exit interview.

**Security**

Maintaining the security of Women's Empowerment offices is every volunteer's responsibility. Develop habits that insure security as a matter of course. For example:

- Always keep cash properly stored. If you are aware that cash is insecurely stored, immediately inform the person responsible.
- Know the location of all alarms and fire extinguishers, and familiarize yourself with the proper procedure for using them.
- Be cautious and aware of who is in our center. Notify a staff member if you have concern over an individual in the center.

**Standards of Conduct**

By agreeing to volunteer with us, you have a responsibility to Women's Empowerment and to your fellow volunteers to adhere to certain guidelines for conduct. Women's Empowerment tries to keep rules to a minimum. The purpose of the rules is not to restrict your rights, but rather to be certain that you understand what conduct is expected and necessary. When each person is aware that he or she can fully depend upon fellow volunteers to follow the rules of conduct, then our organization will be a better place to volunteer for everyone.

**Substance Abuse**

Women's Empowerment has no desire to intrude into its volunteers' personal lives. However, both on-the-job and off-the-job involvement with any mood-altering substances can have an impact on our agency and on Women's Empowerment's ability to achieve its objective of safety and security. Therefore, all volunteers are expected to report to the agency free of the effects of any mood altering substances.



The possession, sale, or usage of mood altering substances while volunteering is a violation of safe volunteer practices and will be subject to dismissal.

Volunteers who show signs or evidence of having consumed alcohol and/or drugs will not be permitted entrance to Women's Empowerment. Violators will be dismissed from all volunteer programs.

### **TB Testing**

Because Women's Empowerment works with a high-risk population, we request that our volunteers get tested annually for Tuberculosis. Results are to be submitted to the Community Partnerships Coordinator.

### **Termination Policy**

Women's Empowerment is an at-will agency and has the right to terminate a volunteer without cause, but will always consider the cause leading to the termination. In general, failure to adhere to policies of Women's Empowerment is cause of immediate release.

Grounds for immediate dismissal may include, but are not limited to:

- Gross misconduct or insubordination
- Reporting for a volunteer assignment under the influence of alcohol or drugs
- Theft of property or misuse of agency funds, equipment or materials
- Falsifying statements on the volunteer application or during the interview process
- Illegal, violent or unsafe acts
- Abuse or mistreatment of clients, volunteers or staff
- Releasing confidential information
- Unwillingness to support and further the mission of the organization

### **Unacceptable Activities**

Generally speaking, we expect each person to act in a mature and responsible way at all times. However, to avoid any possible confusion, some of the more obvious unacceptable activities are noted below. Your avoidance of these activities will be to your benefit as well as the benefit of Women's Empowerment. If you have questions concerning any volunteer or safety rule, or any of the unacceptable activities listed, please see your Community Partnerships Coordinator for an explanation.

If a volunteer violates any rules established by Women's Empowerment, including the following rules, that person may be subject to discipline up to, and including, immediate discharge.



- Willful violation of any agency rule; any deliberate action that is extreme in nature and is obviously detrimental to Women's Empowerment.
- Willful violation of security or safety rules or failure to observe safety rules or Women's Empowerment safety practices; failure to wear required safety equipment; tampering with Women's Empowerment or safety equipment.
- Negligence or any careless action that endangers the life or safety of another person.
- Possession or consumption of alcoholic beverages is prohibited at any Women's Empowerment event designed for the participation of minors.
- Possession or use of all illegal drugs or other illegal substances is prohibited.
- Excessive tardiness or absenteeism.
- Unauthorized possession of dangerous or illegal firearms, weapons or explosives on agency property or while on duty.
- Engaging in criminal conduct or acts of violence, or making threats of violence towards anyone on agency premises or when representing Women's Empowerment; fighting, or horseplay, or provoking a fight on agency property, or negligent damage of property.
- Insubordination or refusing to obey instructions properly issued by your Volunteer Manager.
- Threatening, intimidating or coercing fellow volunteers on or off the premises - at any time, for any purpose.
- Theft of agency property or the property of fellow volunteers or clients; unauthorized possession or removal of any agency property, including documents, from the premises without prior permission from management; unauthorized use of agency equipment or property for personal reasons; using agency equipment for profit.
- Dishonest, willful falsification or misrepresentation of your application for volunteering or other volunteer records; alteration of agency records or other agency documents.
- Breach of confidentiality of personnel information.
- Malicious gossip and/or spreading rumors; engaging in behavior designed to create discord and lack of harmony; interfering with another volunteer on the job; willfully restricting volunteer output or engaging others to do the same.
- Immoral conduct or indecency on agency property.



## Contact Information

Listed below are the members of our leadership and volunteer team. If you have any questions, you can contact members of our lead team listed below and we will happily put you in touch with an appropriate staff member.

### **Lisa Culp**

Executive Director  
(916) 669-2307 Ext 102  
lisa@womens-empowerment.org

### **KT O'Connor**

Community Partnerships Coordinator  
(916) 669-2307 Ext 104  
kt@womens-empowerment.org

### **Holly Byrom**

Development Manager  
(916) 669-2307 Ext 103  
holly@womens-empowerment.org

### **Brian Talcott**

Program Director  
(916) 669-2307 Ext 115  
brian@womens-empowerment.org

### **Michele Smith**

Operations Manager  
(916) 669-2307 Ext 105  
ele@womens-empowerment.org

### **Women's Empowerment Office**

1590 North A St.  
Sacramento, CA 95811  
Phone (916) 669-2307  
Fax (916) 341-0730  
Office Hours: 8:30 am – 3:30 pm, Monday – Friday



# Volunteer Agreement

Women's Empowerment believes in the inherent ability of every woman to make positive changes in her life and to learn to communicate in truthful, respectful ways. Women's Empowerment strives to create a nurturing space where women can share, grow, and heal.

In pursuit of this goal, volunteers are expected to keep all information regarding the women in our program confidential and to treat everyone with respect. If there is a situation in which you feel a staff member should be aware of a problem regarding one of the women in our program, contact the Community Partnerships Coordinator to determine the best possible solution. Failure to comply with these policies may result in dismissal from volunteer staff and/or civil or criminal prosecution in accordance with applicable statutes.

By signing this form, I acknowledge that I been given a copy of the Women's Empowerment Volunteer Handbook. I understand that it summarizes Women's Empowerment's volunteer guidelines and expectations of me as a volunteer. I understand that volunteering with Women's Empowerment is not for a specified term and is at the mutual consent of Women's Empowerment and myself. I agree to abide by the Policies and Procedures laid out in the Volunteer Handbook.

By signing this form, I agree to:

- Honor my commitment to the program
- Cooperate with the WE staff and fellow volunteers
- Be prompt and reliable
- Notify the Community Partnerships Coordinator of any changes to your commitment as a volunteer
- Keep all communications with or concerning the women in our program confidential
- Maintain a respectful relationship with students/graduates and WE staff
- Model professional behavior, through both dress and decorum
- Discuss any and all issues with WE staff
- Respect each woman's right to self determination
- Promote the safety of the women, children, staff and volunteers by adhering to all WE rules and guidelines

**Please keep, this is your copy.**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Print Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

