Project Home
Volunteer Orientation

It is our sincerest hope, that upon going through this material today, you will feel comfortable in fulfilling your duties as a volunteer with Project Home.

We cannot do this vital work without you.

Thank you!
Interfaith Action of Greater Saint Paul

Our Mission:
We unite the people, resources, and voice of the faith community to build a more just, safe and livable East Metro for all.

Our Vision:
People of faith will relieve the effects of poverty and address its causes through the transformative work of thousands of volunteers.

Our Core Programs:

**PROJECT HOME**
Transforming communities of faith into emergency shelter for families in need.

**YOUTH CONNECTION**
Inspiring interfaith dialogue and service learning for young people.

**DEPARTMENT OF INDIAN WORK**
Partnering with American Indian families to revitalize culture, education, and wellness.

**OPPORTUNITY SAINT PAUL**
Strengthening economic mobility by building partnerships, deploying volunteers, and facilitating learning.

www.interfaithaction.org
What We Do

Project Home provides emergency shelter for children and their parents facing homelessness in Ramsey County.

We strive to provide families in need with safe, clean, comfortable overnight shelter until housing is available.

We support families in their journey to stability and for up to six months after they have left shelter.

Project Home does this vital work in partnership with a network of dozens of area churches, synagogues, and schools, along with thousands of volunteers from local faith communities.
Faith Communities Open Their Doors
Each month two different area congregations or schools host Project Home – providing overnight shelter space for up to 20 guests each night. As we only serve families, most of our guests are children.

Volunteers Open Their Hearts
Each night two to five volunteers serve as Evening Shelter Hosts from 5:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.

Each night two volunteers serve as Overnight Shelter Hosts from 8 pm to 7:30 a.m. on weekdays or 9:30 a.m. on weekends.
Why volunteer with Project Home?

At Grace Lutheran Church, we receive as much as, if not more, than we give in our partnership with Project Home. The experience is an eye-opener into the lives of people in our community we don't often know about. The work is upfront and personal. We read and preach about compassion, but with Project Home we become real doers of the Word. We realize the rewards of practicing our faith.

-- Sigrid Johnson
Evening Shift Volunteer

Main responsibilities:

• A Project Home staff person will greet you at 5:30 p.m.
• Welcome shelter guests as they arrive on the bus from the day center
• Serve a healthy evening snack and tidy up the kitchen and eating areas.
• Play and read with guest children
• Chat with guest parents
• Distribute needed items as requested
• Orient the overnight shelter hosts
Overnight Shift Volunteer

Main responsibilities:

• Arrive at 8 p.m. and check-in with the Evening Shift Volunteers. Please bring your own bedding for the night; beds are provided.
• Play and read with guest children
• Chat with guest parents
• Bedtime is 9 p.m. Sunday-Thursday and 10 p.m. on Friday-Saturday
• Secure the building for the night
• Wake families in the morning and set out a light breakfast
• Tidy up the space after families depart for the day center at about 6:30 a.m. weekdays and 8:30 a.m. weekends.
How do families in need find us?

INTAKE:
Families access shelter through Ramsey County Intake by either calling United Way 211 (651-291-0211) or completing intake in person at the Community Action Building, 450 North Syndicate St. #190 in St. Paul (Mon/Wed) and at Central Library in St. Paul (Fri).

HOUSING SERVICES:
Amber Gale, our Project Home Rapid Exit Caseworker, assists our families to find housing opportunities and gather needed personal documents for applications. Her goal is to improve the success rate and speed in which the families we serve are stabilized. Six months of follow-up referral services are offered to each family that leaves shelter.

Additionally, Catholic Charities staff completes an assessment with each of our families and places them on wait lists for area Rapid Re-Housing, Transitional Housing, or Permanent Supportive Housing programs. About 40% of our families enter one of these programs.
Where do families go during the day?

For around-the-clock care, seven days a week, we partner with a day center called The Family Place located in downtown Saint Paul.

Here, families are provided with basic needs help such as daily meals and showers, as well as the other supports they need on their journey back into housing and stability. The Family Place Staff help parents with job searches, applications/documents, and much more.

Project Home provides daily bus transportation after supper from The Family Place to the shelter sites, and back to the day center each morning.
How do kids get to school?

A Saint Paul Public Schools Shelter/School Liaison connects school children with daily transportation back to the school they attended before they entered shelter. Other school districts in the metro area provide similar transportation services.

Many area faith communities participate in the annual *School Tools Drive* organized by the staff of Interfaith Action of Greater Saint Paul. Project Home is one of the recipients this gathering of backpacks and school supplies, ensuring our children have the tools they need to learn.

Additionally, Saint Paul Public Schools Project REACH staff provide evening tutoring at one of the two Project Home shelter sites Monday through Thursday throughout the school year.
Who are our guests?

Project Home families come in all shapes and sizes – we welcome mothers, fathers, grandparents, aunts and uncles with minor children in their care.

The majority of our guests are children. About 30% of our children are under the age of five, 50% are 5-12 years old, and 20% are 13-17 years old.

All are on a journey, seeking stability.

By volunteering, you can play an important role in that journey!
How do families lose their housing?

Many families have recently suffered a personal crisis leading to eventual loss of their housing:

- Loss of job or cutback in hours
- Sudden loss of reliable daycare
- Breakdown of key transportation
- Health emergency for parents or children

It’s not hard to see how, without a connection to good resources, families who live paycheck-to-paycheck, can very quickly find themselves struggling to pay their rent.

Don’t forget the big picture barriers:

- Lack of affordable housing
- Racism – discrimination
- Lack of connections to available resources
What items are provided at the shelter site?

- Project Home provides all the basic items volunteers will need to provide overnight hospitality to our guest families.
- We provide mattresses and port-a-cribs; as well as, clean sheets, blankets and pillows. (We provided two beds for the Overnight Volunteers, but you need to bring your own bedding.)
- We provide all the items needed to prepare a healthy snack for the guests. As a part of our Healthy Hospitality Initiative, we have a weekly snack menu. Staff will help you in the kitchen.
- We want you to interact with the guests and provide many items with which to do that – books, toys, games, puzzles, etc.
- Through kind donations, we also have many hygiene items available and many sizes of diapers and pull ups.
Can I bring a donation with me when I come to volunteer?

Your time is especially valuable to us, but if you’d also like to bring something, we thank you all the more!

We especially love donations of fresh fruit, granola bars, healthy cereal, toothbrushes & toothpaste, socks, baby wipes, deodorant, playing cards, art supplies, coloring books, and activity books.

Our full Wish List can be seen on our website at:

www.interfaithaction.org/ProjectHome
What if there is an emergency?

• Emergencies don’t happen often, but if something occurs, stay calm and give Project Home staff a call. We’re here for you!

• Project Home staff, who help welcome and orient the Evening Shift Volunteers and shelter guest families, typically stay onsite for 1-2 hours.

• After that, Project Home staff are on-call overnight to answer your questions and be a guide if any emergencies do occur. Our numbers are located on the Project Home Log Book, typically located by the phone at the host site.

• If the emergency is life-threatening, please call 911 first, then call the Project Home Staff.

• If the emergency is not life-threatening, give Project Home staff a call and we will gladly provide transportation for the family to go to a local urgent care or hospital of their choice.

• There is a basic First Aid Kit for minor boo-boos, but no over-the-counter medicines are provided.
What if... a parent has a conflict with their child?

- Sometimes observing parent/child interactions in shelter can be uncomfortable. This feeling is normal.
- Remember, it’s not easy to parent under stress and in public. Take a deep breath and try to set aside any judgments.
- Ask yourself “How can I offer support and comfort to this stressed parent? How can I make this situation better?”
- Try to simply empathize with the parent, offer support, and redirect energy – “Sometimes parenting can be so frustrating! Can I get you a cup of tea? I love that scarf you are wearing.”
- Remember, no parent wants this situation for their child. Each parent loves their child and has dreams and goals for their families’ success.
- Concerned your observations are red flags? Give Project Home Staff a call! We want to hear from you.
How can I make a difference?

Project Home
• Sign up to volunteer! You can sign up through your faith communities’ volunteer calendar, or you may wish to be added to our year-round volunteer email list.
• Donate needed items. Check out our Wish List at www.interfaithaction.org/ProjectHome
• Consider a financial contribution. Your gift can help pay for important things like transportation, laundry, and healthy snacks.

The Big Picture
• Spread the word about what you’ve learned here today and later, share your volunteer experience with friends, colleagues, and public officials.
• Connect for advocacy work with our friends at the Metropolitan Interfaith Council on Affordable Housing (www.MICAH.org) and the Joint Religious Legislative Coalition (www.JRLC.org). They do good work and need your help to do more!
Other Project Home Volunteer Opportunities

**Move Day:** Each month, Project Home moves from site to site. It’s a big job and we could use some help! Volunteers are needed to help sort donations, clean, pack/unpack, and move supplies on and off the moving truck. Volunteers are needed between 8 a.m. to noon. Individuals and groups welcome!

**Special Event/Activity:** Organize a family movie night, art/craft/science activity, or holiday-themed fun night for one of our two monthly family shelter sites. Individuals and groups welcome!

**Donation Drive:** Hold a drive for our most needed items in your congregation, neighborhood, school, workplace, etc. Our wish list can be found at: www.interfaithaction.org/ProjectHome
What else can I do to help?

Please consider supporting Project Home through a financial gift.

While much of our funding comes from our government and foundation partners, those funds do not cover everything.

Your gift can make a difference.

Tax Deductible donations can be sent to:
Project Home
Interfaith Action of Greater Saint Paul
1671 Summit Avenue, Saint Paul, MN 55105
Thank you for taking the time to learn about Project Home, the families we serve, and our volunteer opportunities!

Please check out our website at: www.interfaithaction.org/ProjectHome

Or connect with Sara Liegl with Project Home at: (651) 983-6086 or sliegl@interfaithaction.org