



GAP Ministries Celebrating 20 Years of Impact!

Standing in the GAP to provide

HELP for Children

HEALING for Families

HOPE for our Community

VOLUNTEER HANDBOOK

Introduction

Welcome to GAP Ministries! We would like to thank you for partnering with us and volunteering your time to our organization. We look forward to growing in ministry with you and seeing how God chooses to use you in our GAP family!

This Volunteer Handbook has been created to help you become more knowledgeable about volunteering at GAP. We will share a bit of our mission, history, practices and policies, as well as the benefits provided to you as a volunteer.

Please don't hesitate to ask questions. The Volunteer Coordinator or any Program Manager will gladly answer any questions you might have. We ask that you read this handbook carefully and refer to it whenever questions arise.

Thank you again for choosing us to volunteer your time. Please share your experiences with your family, friends, and church to help make the community more aware of GAP and its mission.

Mission

GAP Ministries, a social service nonprofit since 1999, *Stands in the GAP* for those in need, providing HELP for Children, HEALING for Families, and HOPE for our Community.

It is our belief that generational cycles of poverty, addiction, and a growing foster care system can be healed ONE LIFE at a time. Breaking these cycles leads to healthier families and this creates transformed communities.

GAP Ministries is committed to *Standing in the GAP* in three core areas:

CHILDREN – family-style group foster home care, assistance for young adults “aging out” of foster care, and providing more homes for children by training and licensing foster families.

FAMILY – court-ordered supervised visitation and parent aid programs to assist families during reunification with their children in foster care, and programs to restore the lives of women suffering from drug or alcohol addiction.

COMMUNITY- redistributing food and basic needs items to disadvantaged individuals through our warehouse with the partnerships of Southern Arizona nonprofits, culinary and auto mechanic training programs for men and women coming from incarceration or addiction recovery, meals for low-income elementary children and for the elderly.

History

In 1999 the vision for GAP Ministries began in the home of our founders, Greg and Pam Ayers. They both had left successful careers in the finance industry because they heard God's call to care for what the Bible calls the "widows, orphans, hungry, and naked." With a spare room and some extra space in the garage for a food pantry, they felt God had called them to use what was already "in their hands" to impact hurting children and individuals in need.

In the early years, GAP was a single, family-oriented group foster home run out of Greg and Pam's home, utilizing a family-model where (in addition to CEO and Executive Director) they were "mom" and "dad" to 8 abused and neglected foster children. They eventually adopted four of those children. Greg and Pam also began a small redistribution project out of their garage that allowed them to provide food boxes to families who were struggling to make ends meet.

20 years later, GAP has grown tremendously and now has 10 family-style group foster homes caring for almost 100 children and teens each and every night. Additionally, GAP trains and licenses families to care for more foster children, and programs at GAP help parents whose children are in foster care work toward healthy reunification and healing for their families.

The feeding program that began in the Ayer's garage is now a 40,000 square foot warehouse and commercial kitchen. Low-income elementary school children, elderly homebound individuals, and others receive a nutritious, warm meal each day, and thousands of dollars-worth of basic needs items are distributed into our community through multiple nonprofit partners. GAP's job training programs help those coming out of difficult situations find a new career and hope for their futures.

GAP continues to faithfully serve the community in three core areas: Children, Family, & Community.

What to Expect as a Volunteer

We will strive to find an assignment that is based upon your interests, skills, and availability, as well as GAP needs.

We will give you the opportunity to work as part of a team, to contribute to the welfare of the community and the organization, and to be recognized for your contribution.

We will strive to provide the necessary equipment, supplies, work space and helpful supervision.

We will treat you as a fellow team member who contributes to GAP Ministries' goals through your volunteer work.

You can expect that volunteer records will be kept documenting volunteer experience positions held, training, evaluation and commendation.

What Does GAP Expect From a Volunteer?

Please be realistic and candid in accepting your assignments, taking into consideration your personal time frames and responsibilities as well as the needs of GAP.

Learn the details of your volunteer assignments as well as you can by completing all training, asking questions, and staying in touch with the Volunteer Coordinator.

Please inform the Volunteer Coordinator or direct supervisor as soon as possible of any planned absences or lateness.

Help us provide services to many in need by being **reliable** and dependable in doing your volunteer assignment and working with other volunteers and staff.

Please follow all policies and guidelines of GAP such as observing confidentiality when needed and engaging in appropriate public behavior at all times.

Please participate in the feedback process by letting GAP know how you feel about your volunteer experience and by giving us constructive suggestions for improvement.

We ask that our volunteers make a minimum commitment of 4 hours per month.

Policies & Procedures

Standards of Conduct

As a Volunteer, you have a responsibility to GAP Ministries and to your fellow volunteers to adhere to certain guidelines for conduct. The purpose of these 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.

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 GAP Ministries. If you have any questions concerning any volunteer or safety rule, or any of the unacceptable activities listed, please see the Volunteer Coordinator for an explanation.

If any person violates any rules established by GAP Ministries, 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 GAP Ministries
- Negligence or any careless action which endangers the life or safety of another volunteer or recipient
- Possession or use of all illegal drugs or other illegal substances is prohibited
- Unauthorized possession of dangerous or illegal firearms, weapons or explosives while providing volunteer services
- Engaging in criminal conduct or acts of violence, or making threats of violence toward anyone on agency premises or when representing GAP Ministries
- Insubordination or refusing to obey instructions properly issued by your supervisor or volunteer Coordinator
- Threatening, intimidating, coercing, or abusing fellow volunteers or recipients
- Dishonesty, willful falsification or misrepresentation on your application for volunteering or other volunteer records or alteration of agency records or other agency documents
- Being under the influence of alcohol or drugs when providing volunteer services
- Breach of confidentiality of personal information

Statement of Risk & Concern

GAP Ministries is concerned that the health, safety, and welfare of our staff, volunteers, and the children placed in our care be protected to the greatest extent possible. We invite you to join in this concern, to offer suggestions, reports, and comments wherever and whenever you believe these will aid in protecting the health, safety and welfare of all involved with the agency. We urge you to use your best efforts in this endeavor. We expect you to act responsibly in all matters where your own health condition, your actions, and your observation may affect ours or anyone else's health, safety or welfare.

Volunteers are urged to use general caution when on GAP property to prevent the risk of injury. Abiding by general rules and direction from a supervisor is key to aid in this process. Volunteers incurring injuries during time of service will be properly cared for and the appropriate emergency numbers called.

Volunteers working with children in a child care facility such as GAP Ministries may be exposed to communicable illnesses common to young children, covering the entire spectrum from minor illnesses to major ones. Because children may be left with GAP without detailed or complete or accurate health history information, it is often difficult or impossible to evaluate the risk of exposure to illness associated with any particular child. As we are concerned about the welfare of our volunteers as well as their families, we urge volunteers to practice universal precautions. When these techniques and precautions are followed, the risk of contracting communicable illnesses can be greatly reduced.

Confidential Information

Gap Ministries' staff and volunteers adhere to Arizona State Law (ARS 41---1959) requiring confidentiality of children and families involved in dependency proceedings. As you work with GAP 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. No one is permitted to remove or make copies of any GAP records, reports or documents without prior approval. Release of confidential information to unauthorized persons may result in dismissal from your volunteer service.

Media Policy

We understand that as a volunteer you will want to share your experiences with your friends on the internet with photos of the work you did, please refrain from posting pictures of the children in our care on the internet. Due to the sensitivity of the cases of our children, this is not allowed by CPS.

Smoke & Drug Free Environment

GAP Ministries is a drug free workplace and asks all volunteers to abide by this policy. All GAP properties are considered smoke free. Please refrain from smoking in the premises.

Volunteer Grievances

Volunteer grievances are of concern to GAP Ministries, regardless of whether the problems are large or small. There will be no discrimination against or toward anyone for his or her part in presenting a grievance.

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 a high degree of unpleasantness or unhappiness on the job. A grievance may also deal with an attitude, a statement, or an opinion held by a supervisor, manager or volunteer. We encourage you first to take your concerns to your supervisor and see if the issue can be resolved. If you feel uncomfortable in doing that, please seek to address your concerns by following the feedback procedures as follows:

1. Address your Volunteer Coordinator. If you feel that any volunteering condition, policy, practice or action by GAP Ministries is unjust, you should request a meeting with the Volunteer Coordinator and discuss the matter confidentially. If for some reason the Volunteer Coordinator 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 Human Resources Director. The Volunteer Coordinator's immediate supervisor, the HR Director, will review the grievance and may ask to meet with you. At this meeting, you should feel free to openly discuss your complaint and substantiate your reasons for feeling the way you do. The HR Director will have the final say as to the resolution of your grievance.

Dress Code

Personal appearance of both staff and volunteers is a direct reflection on the organization and should be conservative and tasteful at all times. We ask that no sleeveless T-shirts, halter, spaghetti –strap or tank tops, short shorts, or any clothing which is inappropriate for the workplace be worn when volunteering including any item with slogans or pictures inconsistent with our mission.

For our volunteers who are working at the front desk and who are on the “front line” to greet potential people who enter our offices, we ask that your dress be a little less casual in nature as you are the first person who folks such as donors, dignitaries, and city, state, and governmental officials see when they walk in our front door. For our volunteers who are working in the warehouse or construction worksites closed-toe shoes are required.

Absences & Tardiness

The positions that volunteers fill are critical to GAP. If you fail to show up or are late, we are left short-handed. If you are unable to report for your volunteer assignment or if you will arrive late, please contact your area supervisor. The same rules apply when going on vacation; the sooner you can tell us, the easier it is on us. Excessive absences may be reason for a discussion between you and the Volunteer Coordinator concerning whether your currently assigned volunteer position is a ‘good fit’ for you.

We know that many of our volunteers are seasonal visitors, please let us know when you are leaving for the summer. You may volunteer again as soon as you notify the Volunteer Coordinator of your return and are reassigned by the Volunteer Coordinator.

Resignation

While we hope both you and GAP Ministries will mutually benefit from your continued volunteering, we realize that it may become necessary for you to leave your volunteer position with GAP. If you anticipate having to resign your position, please notify the Volunteer Coordinator or your supervisor.

Receiving Donations

Some of our volunteers may be eligible to receive products from our Good 360 Program or donations from GAP. If you believe you may qualify due to hardship of any kind, and would like to apply for this assistance, please speak to your supervisor. Then we would ask you to fill out the proper application forms in order to receive help through our Community Warehouse program. Without the proper paperwork and documentation, volunteers are not to take products in return for volunteering with our agency.

Child Abuse & Maltreatment Reporting

Abuse can be physical, emotional, or sexual.

- *Physical abuse is application of force that produces pain or injury.* Spanking, beating, holding hard enough to bruise, cutting, scraping, burning and tying up a child are forms of physical abuse. Signs of physical abuse include injuries that are inconsistent with the story of how the injury occurred. Bruises on the face, abdomen, or backside of an infant and welts in the shape of a belt buckle, tree limb, cord, rope and/or hand are suggestive of physical abuse.
- *Emotional abuse occurs when adults treat children in developmentally inappropriate ways, damaging their spirit and self-esteem through belittling, verbal abuse or excessive demands.* Emotionally abused children are recognized by the extremes of behavior they display: unusual aggressiveness, unusual shyness, or low self-esteem with an inability to accept praise. They are unhappy, often emotionally unresponsive or fearful.
- *Sexual abuse of children is any use of a child for sexual gratification.* Generally, privacy and secrecy are necessary for sexual abuse to occur. By far, the most common situation is for sexual abuse to occur in childcare toileting facilities during times when fewer caregivers are present. Sexually abused children often show no indication other than an unusual interest in the knowledge of sexual matters. Children who have been violently sexually assaulted may exhibit difficulty walking, stained or bloody underwear, bruises or infections unusual for children, and extreme changes in behavior.

All staff and volunteer members at GAP Ministries have the responsibility for the care and treatment of the children placed in GAP's care. Any knowledge of child maltreatment or abuse must be reported IMMEDIATELY via the following procedures:

1. Notify the Volunteer coordinator and/or HR Director of GAP Ministries and take precautions to prevent further risk to the child who allegedly suffered the maltreatment and potential risk to other children in care.
2. With the direction of the Volunteer Coordinator, and/or HR Director report the suspected incident of maltreatment to law enforcement (911) or CPS Hotline (1-888-767-2445).
3. The Volunteer Coordinator will notify the Program Director and the Program Director will notify the licensing authority and the child's CPS caseworker/placing agency.
4. The Program director and/or Director of GAP Ministries will evaluate the retention of any staff or volunteer that commits or allows child maltreatment, and conduct an internal investigation if necessary.

All staff and volunteers are required to review the Volunteer Handbook, which indicates the Volunteer understands GAP policies and their duty to report child maltreatment.