



2022-23 GUEST HANDBOOK

May all who enter as guests, leave as friends.

Men's Shelter

120 S. Norton St.

Mount Vernon, Ohio 43050 (7 40) 392-9277

Women's Shelter

100 E. High St.

Mount Vernon, Ohio 43050

Table of Contents

Welcome	2
Mission/Our History	2
Responsibilities of Guests	2
Sign In/Sign Out	2
Safety	3
Relationships/Boundaries	3
Health & Hygiene	3
Housekeeping	4
Computers	4
Medications	4
Liability	4
Transportation	4
Mail	4
Leaving the Shelter	4
Confidentiality Agreement	4
Guest Warning Protocol	5
Intoxication Policy	5

WELCOME TO THE WINTER SANCTUARY HOMELESS SHELTER

Since 2008, we have been serving the homeless community by offering an emergency, overnight, winter shelter for homeless men, women, and children on an emergency walk-in basis. Currently we are a winter shelter only. Our dates for every season are November 1 - April 1. The general hours of operation are 6:30pm - 9:00am daily. If you have further questions you may call our Operations Manager/Advocate, Joe Springer at (740) 392-9277 or email the shelter at joe.wintersanctuary@gmail.com.

The service we provide is emergency shelter. Other services are available in the city and county. Our advocate and volunteers will refer guests to these other agencies. The Winter Sanctuary is a 501 (c)(3) nonprofit organization. We are committed to providing an environment that is free from discrimination in employment, volunteer opportunities and guest admittance because of race, color, religion, creed, national origin, ancestry, disability, gender, sexual orientation, or age. Personnel procedures are strictly followed that will ensure equal opportunity for all people.

MISSION

Our mission is to provide seasonal, emergency shelter for the members of our community who experience homelessness and to connect them with resources that empower them to be successful and self-sufficient.

OUR HISTORY

The Winter Sanctuary operates seasonal emergency shelters for men and women. Members of St. Paul's Episcopal Church and other interested parties first established our organization during the winter of 2008. Over the years, it has grown from a local church ministry to a non-profit organization serving men, women and children. In 2011, we became a 501 (c)(3) organization.

There are many more individuals living without permanent shelter than numbers show. Many homeless people "couch-surf", sleep overnight in their vehicles, or seek refuge in nearby woods and fields. The staff of The Winter Sanctuary has speculated that because Mount Vernon is a rural community, those without homes probably prefer not to be seen by the public or even by their peers. Unlike a larger city, there is no subculture of homelessness that exists to promote unity and support.

Due to a generous grant awarded by The United Way of Knox County, The Winter Sanctuary continues to have an Advocate to work with the guests of our shelters in order to empower them to be successful. Guests will have an opportunity to establish their own goals, and overcome hurdles in such areas as employment, housing, health, and substance addiction.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF GUESTS

Sign In/Sign Out

- I agree to complete the intake process before I can spend the night at the shelter;
- I will complete the check-in procedure upon arrival to the shelter each night. A staff person will document my arrival;
- I will arrive between 6:30 pm and 10:00 pm each night unless I make prior arrangements with the staff. Otherwise, I will not be admitted;
- I understand once I have signed in I must remain for the night. If I choose to leave, I understand I cannot return until 6:30pm the following evening.

Safety

- At intake, I agree to be drug tested;
- I agree to be honest about my criminal background. I have no outstanding warrants nor do I have a sex offense record. (All guests must complete records check before registering at The Winter Sanctuary);
- I will not bring weapons (including pocketknives), alcohol, illegal drugs, or paraphernalia to the shelter. I understand that my belongings may be searched at any time by staff of the Winter Sanctuary;
- I will not engage in the purchase, sale, or distribution of any illegal drugs or prescription medications on the Winter Sanctuary property;
- I will smoke/vape only in the designated area while maintaining 6' of social distancing. Cigarette butts must be put into the container provided;
- Smoking/vaping outside will not be permitted after 11 :00 pm;
- If I am suspected of being under the influence, I will be subjected to drug testing;
- I agree to abstain from swearing, violence, threatening behavior, fighting, yelling, or arguing;
- I will not switch beds, move my bed, or change the orientation of my bed
- I agree to turn off all electronic devices no later than 11 :00 pm;
- I agree to not loiter in the bathroom
- I agree to not shower after 11 pm.

Relationships/Boundaries

- I agree to respect volunteers, staff, and other guests;
- I will not bring visitors to the shelter or allow anyone entry to the building without permission from staff or volunteers;
- I will not socialize with non-guests when I am outside smoking or otherwise on shelter property;
- I am allowed to bring movies to the shelter that are rated PG-13 or under;
- Absolutely no materials with nudity, sexual content, vulgar language, or any other offensive material in electronic form or hard copy (e.g. magazines) will be allowed;
- I will not show public displays of affection or unwanted flirting with any guest, volunteer, or staff;
- I will not participate in any form of sexual harassment;
- I will sleep in my assigned bed;
- Guests will be out of bed no later than 7:30am so that they are have time to get dressed, make their bed, and complete their daily chores;
- I will not send a friend request or message to a volunteer or staff on any social network during my stay at the shelter;
- Volunteers are limited by our policies as to what they can do to assist you.
**Please do not ask them to overstep their guidelines. (No transportation, restaurant/store runs, any type of purchases, personal storage, laundry services, visits to their home etc.)

Health and Hygiene

- I will wash my hands/use hand sanitizer frequently.
- I will shower at the intake and daily with soap;
- I will brush my teeth daily with toothpaste;
- I will wash all personal clothing on intake;
- I agree to wear clothing at all times (except in the bathroom)

Housekeeping

- I will clean up after myself including washing my dishes, spraying down the shower with provided cleanser after each use, etc.;
- I will perform chores every day;
- I will label my food with name and date;
- I understand the shelter phone, which is located in the Advocates' office, is for staff and emergencies only.

Computers

- Computers are for limited use: to check email and to research housing, employment, and other related benefits/resources.

Medications

- I will keep my prescribed and over-the-counter medications and valuables locked up in the provided lockers or with me at all times.

Liability

- I understand The Winter Sanctuary accepts no liability for loss or theft of my personal possessions left at the shelter;
- I understand that The Winter Sanctuary is not responsible or legally liable for physical injury, illness or impairment, or my own refusal to seek such medical attention.

Transportation

- The Winter Sanctuary does NOT provide transportation. We will be happy to assist you with phone calls to make transportation arrangements.

Mail

- I may forward my mail to P.O. Box 421, Mt. Vernon, Ohio, 43050 while I'm a guest at the Winter Sanctuary. Mail cannot be held for non-guests.

Leaving the Winter Sanctuary

- The Winter Sanctuary will not be responsible for any items left if 1. am no longer a guest;
- The Winter Sanctuary will hold a former guest's belongings for one (1) week.

CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT

- I will keep all information regarding guests at the shelter and former guests confidential.
- I have the right to any information saved in my file. I realize that it may take three (3) days for information to be gathered, copies to be made, and released to me.
- **GUEST WARNING PROTOCOL**

- Warnings and dismissals will be issued for not following the basic program. Some examples of each set of warnings are listed below.
 - **Verbal Warnings** (given for the first occurrence of the following):
 - Changing beds or changing the sleeping direction of their assigned bed;
 - Refusal to follow one or more of the guest responsibilities;
 - Refusal to meet with the advocate;
 - Failure to notify the shelter if you are going to be away from the shelter for the night;
 - Swearing/cursing;
 - Possession of R-rated movies;
 - Failure to complete daily chores.
 - **Written Warnings** (given for the following):
 - Public displays of affection and unwanted flirting with guest, volunteer, staff, etc.;
 - Disrespect of a volunteer, staff, guest, etc.;
 - Tampering with off-limits belongings;
 - Being at the women's shelter or men's shelter without prior permission from volunteer or staff;
 - Bringing in sexually explicit material to the shelter;
 - Entering the shelter under the influence of drugs or alcohol (see Intoxication Policy).
 - **Immediate Dismissal Warnings** (guests will be dismissed for the season without a previous written warning under the following):
 - Possessing a weapon on property including pocket knives;
 - Possessing an illegal drug, paraphernalia, or alcohol on property;
 - Falsifying information or stealing;
 - Violent fighting, loud arguing (yelling, cursing, etc.), or bullying;
 - Sexual harassment;
 - Entering the building by any means without escort/permission of the appropriate staff or volunteers;
 - Refusal to follow Intoxication Policy.
 - **General Procedures:**
 - Residents may receive only three (3) verbal warnings; any subsequent violation will result in a dismissal for the season;
 - Two (2) written warnings will result in dismissal for the season;
 - One (1) immediate dismissal will result in termination for the season.
- **INTOXICATION POLICY**
 - Guests will not be permitted to stay at the shelter when they are repeatedly under the influence of alcohol or drugs. Unfortunately, some guests do struggle with AOD issues, however in the best interest and safety of all guests and volunteers, intoxication cannot be accepted. Guests of the shelter will be given a drug test the morning after arriving for the first time. A written warning will be given and the guest will be provided with options and referrals to treatment (i.e. counseling, self-help meetings, etc.) after the first positive drug test. If the problem persists, the guest will be terminated for the season. The guests must agree to unannounced drug and alcohol testing.

