



Catholic Charities
Archdiocese of New Orleans



Operation Helping Hands:

*A volunteer program of
Catholic Charities Archdiocese of New Orleans
to assist the community
in reoccupying their homes*

Project Summary

In the devastating wake of Hurricane Katrina, Operation Helping Hands, a program under Catholic Charities, Archdiocese of New Orleans, has provided a desperately needed service to the people of Greater New Orleans by amassing over 14,000 volunteers willing to lend a hand. Operation Helping Hands volunteers have gutted over 1100 homes and over 800 apartments for elderly citizens. We are rebuilding homes of those most in need, and are partnering with Christopher Homes, Inc. (a housing program under the archdiocese of New Orleans) to restore apartment buildings for elderly citizens on fixed incomes. The outcome of this effort will add to the future health of the city and confirm the commitment of the Catholic Church to serving those in need.

Operation Helping Hands mobilizes a large volunteer corps supported by the leadership of Catholic Charities and church parishes within the Archdiocese of New Orleans.

The volunteer are organized in groups ranging from 4-8 people. Ideally groups come with their own designated leaders to volunteer for five working days, but at least a minimum of three work days. Volunteers come from outside the Archdiocese and will involve members of the local and surrounding communities.

Project Goals: Operation Helping Hands

- Demonstrate the love of Christ through helping hands
- Mobilize and manage a volunteer corps to help the neediest home owners within the Archdiocese of New Orleans to clean up their neighborhoods and restore their homes in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina
- Strengthen the solidarity of parishes, Catholic Charities agencies and other partnering groups across the Archdiocese

Types of Work Undertaken

- Cleaning and preparing houses or apartments for rebuilding
- Yard clean-up and exterior work, including exterior painting
- Installing insulation
- Hanging and finishing drywall
- Installing interior trim and flooring
- Painting home interiors
- Other work related to restoring homes and apartments

General Guidelines/Safety Considerations

- Volunteers must be at least 18 years old. College groups are asked that two campus ministers/staff/faculty accompany every 10 students. With limited staff, this expands the leadership capacity and increases the opportunity for learning as well as serving.
- Volunteers should have had a tetanus shot in the past 10 years. You ***must*** have a ***tetanus shot*** in order to work with our program. No hepatitis vaccinations are necessary at this time.
- Volunteers are required to work in heavy-duty closed-toed shoes, not athletic shoes. Work or hiking boots are recommended to avoid possible injuries from debris such as broken glass, exposed nails, etc.
- Volunteers are asked to wear work clothes appropriate to their working conditions. Even in warm weather, long sleeves and pants will ensure fewer cuts, scrapes and mosquito bites. Summers in New Orleans are very hot and humid and it is important to wear clothing that breathes. While it is important to have at least one long sleeve shirt along, t-shirts are often the more comfortable choice at hotter times of the year. Do not bring clothing that has significant monetary or sentimental value to you.
- Choice of clothing should be in good taste, modest, and be consistent with the values of the archdiocese of New Orleans.
- Volunteers are encouraged to use sunscreen and mosquito repellent.
- Volunteers must bring sleeping bags, towels and/or bed linens.

Some Frequently Asked Questions

What about meals and accommodations?

Catholic Charities will provide simple meals and accommodations. There will be one hot meal per day with a cold breakfast (muffins, cereal) and box or “sack” lunch that volunteers will make themselves and take with them to the work site. We also ask that you indicate whether there are any special dietary needs (allergies, vegetarian). If there are specific food items that you want, we ask that you either bring them with you or buy them when you arrive. Given the damage to housing and archdiocesan facilities in the area and the number of volunteers at any given time, accommodations might range from cots or air mattresses in efficiency apartments, dormitory-type residence halls, or in former classroom or gymnasiums. Accommodation assignments will be given out at least one week prior to arrival.

What kind of skills do you require?

We accept all kinds of volunteers who are able and willing to do physically demanding labor. We do have a special need for volunteers who are professionals in the construction field.

Can my group still help if we have no construction experience?

While we find that volunteer groups with at least some skilled volunteers tend to have the most positive experience, we welcome all who feel called to help the people of New Orleans rebuild their city. Often having just a couple of members with construction skills in your group offers a unique opportunity for learning and building relationships.

A group of college students from Immaculata University in Philadelphia can serve as an anecdote for how some groups have worked ahead of their arrival in New Orleans to maximize their impact on the city. The campus minister planning their trip invited two carpenters from their community who knew several of the students on the trip to join them, even though they were not students themselves. Further, they arranged drywall seminars for all of their trip participants one Saturday before they came down and partnered with some older members of the parish where the campus minister had grown up to provide additional construction leadership to their group. As a result, the students had a better experience and the group was able to complete more valuable work for the homeowners they served. While each of these actions took additional planning prior to the trip, they represent a relatively small investment relative to the time and energy the trips participants put forth over the course of a week working with us.

Where do we go when we first arrive in New Orleans?

We will send you directions to your housing site (unless you are providing your own housing) and one of our staff will meet you there or a key will be left. We prefer that groups arrive together. Due to our limited personnel, we do not have a staff member at the housing sites. We will ask you to get in touch with one of us by cell phone once you have arrived in town, and then we will go to meet you at your housing site or let you know where the key is hidden.

Are your dorms arranged to separate men from women?

Our housing has a variety of floor plans; some are more conducive to separating women from men than others. We leave it to each group to sort out the sleeping and shower arrangements.

Will it disrupt anyone's plans if we eat out?

We encourage our volunteers to enjoy the culture of New Orleans while they are here, including local cuisine. This is also a boost to our economy as well as a break for our staff and our budget. We ask that you give our hospitality coordinator as much notice as possible if you are planning on eating out.

Is alcohol permitted at the housing sites?

Due to archdiocesan policy and licensing procedures at some of our facilities, we cannot permit alcohol to be on the premises of any of our housing locations.

Is there a fee per participant?

As not to exclude anyone, donations are suggested but not required for each participant. Catholic Charities can ensure you that volunteers' contributions will offset the costs of the program for meals, accommodations and supplies. Please make contributions checks

payable to Catholic Charities Archdiocese of New Orleans and clearly indicate in the check memo “Operation Helping Hands.”

What is the normal workday?

We normally start the day at 8:00 and leave the worksite by 4:00.

Where do we report on our first day of work?

Our groups normally begin their first day at St. Raymond Catholic Church at 3738 Paris Ave. in New Orleans. One of our crew members will greet you there, provide a brief orientation on our program and the current state of the city and give you the expectations for your work.

Do volunteers need their own transportation?

Yes, volunteers do need to provide their own ground transportation in New Orleans. We have learned from experience that we do not have the capacity to provide drivers for Catholic Charities vehicles, and our insurance does not permit volunteers to drive them. Volunteers should not bring vehicles larger than a 12-passenger van. It would be difficult for a bus to navigate the streets of the residential areas where you will be working. Ideally, volunteers should travel in 7 – passenger minivans as it maximizes our flexibility in scheduling work crews.

How long should volunteers plan to stay?

Ideally, volunteers would arrive on the weekend and work Monday through Friday. Volunteers are asked to commit to at least a three working days. Some groups may even stay longer.

Does Operation Helping Hands work on weekends and holidays?

Operation Helping Hands can accommodate some volunteers on Saturdays. The program takes a rest on Sundays. Our program takes a rest on New Years’ Day, Martin Luther King, Jr. Day, Saturday through Tuesday of the Mardi Gras holiday, Friday through Monday of Easter weekend, Memorial Day, the 4th of July, Labor Day weekend, Thanksgiving weekend, plus Christmas and the weekend it falls closest to.

What if my group is not Catholic?

Catholic Charities serves, employs and seeks to involve people of all faiths.

How do I organize a group?

Ideally, groups should be organized into 4-8 volunteers. We reserve the right to turn away groups larger than 25 due to issues of capacity. Please designate a leader, who will be the contact person. The group leader will take responsibility for communicating with the Catholic Charities Operation Helping Hands team as well as sharing all pertinent information with the other volunteer participants.

Will our group be able to stay together at the worksite?

We do our best to keep groups together, but we may need to split groups up based on the needs of the program and/or the size of the group.

Should we bring our own supplies?

All tools and supplies are provided by Operation Helping Hands. Your safety is important to us, so we want to ensure that you have the proper safety equipment and tools. When volunteers bring their own tools, they tend to get confused with our tools or lost, so we recommend that volunteers leave their tools at home. We do provide respirators for mold remediation as well as first aid kits at each work site. As it gets closer to the time for your trip, we will be able to tell you if other specific types of items will be needed.

Will we be working with lead or asbestos?

No volunteers will be required to work with asbestos at all. However, volunteers working on housing exteriors may come into contact with lead-based paint. Rest assured that Operation Helping Hands will provide all the necessary training and equipment for working with lead-based paint.

What types of forms, paperwork are required?

All members of the volunteer group must read the Volunteers Code of Conduct, complete and sign the application, and archdiocesan liability release (*please duplicate*) which follow in this packet. **These will be collected when you arrive and must be filled out before you can begin working.** Group leaders are asked to keep a list of emergency contacts for everyone in the group with them at all times in the event of an injury or accident.

What if I cannot come right now, but want to help later? How long will Operation Helping Hands continue?

Hurricane Katrina was the worst disaster in the nation's history. Never before has a natural event caused so much destruction in a densely populated area. Rebuilding the New Orleans metropolitan area will take decades, and there will always be a role for volunteers to assist – even if, over time, it is in a different capacity.

If I have questions or would like to schedule my group, who should I call?
Please contact:

Kristi Ord
Operation Helping Hands ~ Volunteer Services
504-821-7230
504-821-7213 Fax
kord@archdiocese-no.org

Catholic Charities Archdiocese of New Orleans
1050 S. Jefferson Davis Pkwy. Ste. 212
New Orleans, LA 70125

Catholic Charities, Archdiocese of New Orleans

Code of Professional Conduct for Volunteers

This Code of Professional Conduct for Volunteers provides the general outline and set of standards for conduct to be exercised by volunteers at all times. Volunteers will be responsible for adherence to this Code. The Code will be used in conjunction with other related guidelines, rules and policies as applicable to each volunteer at their specific work site. Each volunteer will sign an acknowledgement of receipt of the Code and a copy will be filed with the Volunteer Application.

Standard Conduct with Clients

1. Volunteers will maintain an open and trustworthy relationship with clients including youth (an individual who has not reached the legal age of majority -18 years of age).
2. Volunteers will not use or possess alcohol and/or illicit drugs while working with any client.
3. Volunteers will be aware of the potential impropriety and even the appearance of impropriety, when working with clients. Volunteers will not work alone with a youth.
4. Volunteers, will not share overnight accommodations alone with youth including, but not limited to, accommodations in any church-owned facility, private residence, hotel room, or any other place. In an emergency situation, when accommodation is necessary for the health and well-being of youth and the above prohibition cannot be avoided, extraordinary care will be necessary for the protection of all parties from the risk of harm and even the appearance of impropriety.
5. Volunteers should exercise discretion in having any physical contact with any client.
6. All volunteers must respect the faith and/or beliefs of the client. Volunteers will not proselytize or impose personal religious beliefs upon the client
7. Volunteers will understand their relationship with the client is not legal or financial in nature.
8. Volunteers are prohibited from dating or having sexual contact with any client.

Reporting Standards

1. Catholic Charities personnel and volunteers will hold one another accountable for maintaining the highest ethical, moral and professional standards. Volunteers will take seriously every allegation or report of unethical behavior and/or professional misconduct.
2. In the event that the allegation or report involves any form of abuse, either mental, physical, or both, or the substantial risk of danger to the health or welfare of any client, then volunteers will report same to local law enforcement authorities immediately and thereafter report same to their immediate supervisor.

Administration

1. Personnel and other administrative decisions made by volunteers will meet civil and canon law obligations; reflect Catholic social teachings and the standards of this Code.
2. Volunteers will not use their positions to exercise unreasonable or inappropriate power and authority or take advantage of anyone to further their personal, religious, political, or business interest.
3. Volunteers will avoid any situation that might present a conflict of interest or even the appearance of a conflict of interest.
4. Volunteers should inform all affected parties including their supervisor, when a real or potential conflict of interest exists.

Well-Being of Volunteers

1. Volunteers should be aware of warning signs that indicate potential problems with their own spiritual, physical, mental and/or emotional health.
2. Volunteers should seek help immediately whenever they notice behavioral or emotional warning signs in their own lives.
3. Catholic Charities personnel and volunteers should cooperate with and support one another.

Harassment

1. Volunteers will not engage in any form of physical, psychological, written and/or verbal harassment of any person and will not tolerate any such conduct by any other Catholic Charities personnel.
2. Catholic Charities staff and volunteers will maintain a professional work environment that is free from any and all forms of physical, psychological, written and/or verbal intimidation or harassment.
3. This prohibition against harassment encompasses a broad range of physical, psychological, written and/or verbal behavior including without limitation: physical or mental abuse; racial insults, comments or jokes; derogatory ethnic slurs; unwelcome sexual advances or touching; sexual comments or jokes; display of offensive materials; or requests for sexual activity or behavior of any kind for any reason. Catholic Charities staff and volunteers will take every report or allegation of harassment seriously and will report same to their immediate supervisor.

Communication Standards

1. Catholic Charities staff and volunteers should be open to and accessible to one another and to all parishioners.
2. Catholic Charities staff and volunteers should address and seek to resolve all matters promptly, efficiently and fairly.
3. Catholic Charities personnel and volunteers will not create, send, forward, or transmit any message containing hostile, intimidating and/or offensive material pertaining to race, sex, religion, national origin, disability, or age in any form or medium including, without limitation: verbal, handwritten, typewritten, electronic communication, using any equipment, computer, Catholic Charities-owned telephone and/or cellular phone, PDA or other device used in connection with Catholic Charities-related activities.



OPERATION HELPING HANDS - VOLUNTEER APPLICATION

<input type="checkbox"/> GROUP VOLUNTEER	Organization/Church/School Name: _____
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1. PERSONAL DATA *(Please print clearly)*

Name (First, Middle, Last Name) _____
 Address _____ City _____ State _____ Zip _____
 Work Phone _____ Home Phone _____ Cell Phone _____
 E-mail Address _____

2. AVAILABILITY

Dates Available: _____	Arrival: _____	Departure: _____
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***3. EMERGENCY CONTACT** *(Please give these numbers to your group leader.)*

In case of emergency, please notify _____
 Day-Time Phone _____ Evening Phone _____ Cell Phone _____
 Phone _____

How did you hear about this program?

4. BACKGROUND, EDUCATION, EXPERIENCE

Are you 18 years or older? Yes No
 Have you had a tetanus shot in the past 10 years? Yes No
 Are you willing and able to do physical labor? Yes No
 Highest Level of Education High School College Other

5. CERTIFICATION

I hereby certify that the above information is true and complete to the best of my knowledge. I acknowledge I have read and understand the Code of Profession Conduct for Volunteers. I understand that any action inconsistent with this Code, or failure to take action mandated by this Code on my part, may result in termination of my volunteer services.

 Signature Date

You are not required to complete this section. This information is for statistical purposes only.

Sex:	<input type="checkbox"/> Male	<input type="checkbox"/> Female		
Race:	<input type="checkbox"/> Caucasian	<input type="checkbox"/> Black	<input type="checkbox"/> Asian	<input type="checkbox"/> Hispanic
Disability:	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	Please specify: _____	

RELEASE, HOLD HARMLESS AND INDEMNITY AGREEMENT

In consideration of my being allowed to participate in the repair and clean-up effort sponsored by Catholic Charities Archdiocese of New Orleans, in _____, Louisiana, I, _____(hereinafter "Releasor"), a person of the full age of majority and a resident of the County/Parish of _____, State of _____, do hereby acknowledge that:

- 1) I voluntarily have chosen to travel to the foregoing area to perform cleanup and/or construction efforts in disaster relief at various types of houses and/or buildings (hereinafter "volunteer effort");
- 2) I understand that this volunteer effort entails a risk of physical and/or mental and/or emotional injury and often involves hard physical labor, heavy lifting, and/or other strenuous activity, which activity may include climbing on ladders and building framing other than on ground level;
- 3) I understand that the volunteer effort may expose me to harmful and/or illness-causing substances, including but not limited to mold and/or mildew;
- 4) I am in good health and physically and emotionally able to perform the foregoing volunteer effort.

I further understand that I am engaging in this volunteer effort at my own risk and will be exposed to various injury-causing risks, including but not limited to contracting of illnesses and/or incurring physical injuries. I also understand that I am assuming any and all risk of any injury or damages of any type that I may sustain, including but not limited to physical, mental, or financial injuries (e.g., loss of wages). I also understand that I am solely responsible for any and all costs and/or expenses that I may incur arising out of my participation in the volunteer effort, including but not limited to any costs and/or expenses arising out of housing, meals, and/or losses from theft. I also understand that in performing services for the volunteer effort that if I become injured, because of the conditions of the City of New Orleans and its environs I may not have available to me the same level of medical care that I may be accustomed to which may subject me to further, additional risks of physical and/or emotional injury or damage and/or may increase the severity of such injury or damage.

I further understand that in the event that I am offered any housing accommodations while participating in the volunteer effort, I will abide by whatever regulations may be in effect for the accommodations at the time.

In consideration of my being able to participate in the volunteer effort, which participation I acknowledge has intrinsic value and worth to me, I further agree to release, indemnify and hold harmless The Roman Catholic Church of the Archdiocese of New Orleans, Catholic Charities Archdiocese of New Orleans, any other related entity of the Archdiocese of New Orleans, whether separately incorporated or not, including but not limited to Parishes, and their members, officers, directors, executives, administrators, pastors, clergy, faculty, administrators, employees, representatives, insurers, reinsurers and/or self-insurance administrators, assigns and/or representatives (hereinafter collectively referred to as "the Releasees") of and from any and all manner of actions, suits, liens, debts, damages, injuries (including but not limited to claims for bodily injury, mental anguish and/or death), economic damages (including but not limited to loss of wages and loss by theft), claims arising from travel or lodging and any and all other claims and demands whatsoever (hereinafter, collectively, "claims"), at law or in equity, and arising out of or under any law of the United States, or any of the several states, including but not limited to the laws of the State of Louisiana, including but not limited to the laws of obligations and/or laws of tort and/or delict, arising from my participation in volunteer effort, whether such claims or causes of action arise from my own negligence, strict liability or fault or from the negligence, strict liability or fault of Releasees or any third parties for whom the volunteer effort is performed. Releasor specifically acknowledges that this agreement includes a Release, Hold Harmless and Indemnity in favor of Releasees and third parties for their own negligence, strict liability or fault of any kind or nature whatsoever.

I further agree that this Agreement shall be construed in accord with the laws of the State of Louisiana, which shall be the forum for any dispute concerning my participation in the volunteer effort. I further acknowledge and agree that the terms and conditions of this Agreement shall be severable and that if any term or condition shall be held to be illegal, unenforceable or in conflict with the laws of the State of Louisiana, the validity of the remaining portions of the Agreement shall not be affected thereby and shall remain in full force and effect.

I further agree that this Agreement supersedes any previous and/or contemporaneous verbal agreements in regard to my participation in the volunteer effort and cannot be changed an/or amended unless in writing.

By: _____ Date: _____

Print Name: _____

