

Bloomington Severe Winter Emergency Shelter 2026-2027 Volunteer Manual & Reference Guide



Our Mission Statement:

**“Our mission is to provide a warm, safe place to sleep
for people without overnight shelter during severe winter weather.”**

Guests’ & Volunteers’ Rights & Responsibilities

B-SWERS Volunteers, Guests & Staff work together to provide a service to people in need. Everyone in our B-SWERS community has certain rights that must be respected and responsibilities to meet to ensure fulfillment of Our Mission as stated above.

- Volunteers and Guests have the right to expect their bodily space, safety and personal property to be respected at all times by everyone present at a shelter site.
- Volunteers and Guests have the right to expect consistent treatment and consequences for their actions.
- Volunteers and Guests are responsible for following all B-SWERS rules and policies.
- Volunteers and Guests are responsible for treating the Host Site property respectfully, cleaning up after themselves and reporting any damage immediately.
- Volunteers and Guests are responsible for refraining from abusive or threatening words or actions.
- Volunteers are responsible for providing a safe environment for Guests, Volunteers, and the Host Site by *consistently and fairly* following B-SWERS rules.
- Volunteers and Guests are responsible for providing the best possible atmosphere for enabling guests to sleep.

B-SWERS Is Not Religious

The B-SWERS Shelter (hereafter called “Shelter”) is a non-religious service program sponsored by multiple Bloomington churches and hosted by First Christian Church, First United Methodist Church, and First Presbyterian Church. Proselytizing and/or promoting one’s own religious beliefs among guests and volunteers during shelter hours on Host Site properties is not permitted. Doing so may result in losing the opportunity to volunteer.

Things To Know:

- **The Bloomington Severe Winter Emergency Shelter Volunteer Manual and Reference Guide** is intended for training and reference. It does not cover every situation shelter volunteers encounter.
- Coupled with guidance from shelter staff and experienced volunteers, this guide can help you perform well as a Volunteer.
- You are never alone. Shelter staff and fellow volunteers are constantly close by and ready to assist. Rely on your fellow Volunteers who have the experience and the authority to assist you at all times and in any situation.
- Training is essential so get as much as you are able. The B-SWERS Leadership Team can link you to additional training resources.

Administrative Structure

The **Bloomington Severe Winter Emergency Shelter (B-SWERS)** is operated almost entirely by Volunteers like you. The B-SWERS Leadership Team meets year round to set policy, coordinate with other shelter providers, secure funding and recruit/train volunteers. During the shelter season, October 1–March 31, the Leadership Team oversees shelter operations, works with host churches and supports volunteers.

2026-2026 Leadership Team Members

***The Volunteer Coordinator** develops a roster of volunteers over the shelter season, communicating with them regularly and contacting them to fill shift schedules for open shelter nights. The VC maintains volunteer records, and works with other Leadership Team members to develop/deliver ongoing volunteer training opportunities.*

- Volunteer Coordinator ~ Dan Caldwell
sacredheartbtown@gmail.com

***The Communications Coordinator** coordinates all B-SWERS publicity, publicizes shelter open nights via area media outlets, fields all media inquiries, organizes public fundraising events, and communicates with the media to share the B-SWERS story for recruiting volunteers, seeking donations and raising operating funds.*

- Communications Coordinator ~ Martha Michelson, mgmichelson@gmail.com

Site coordinators represent host congregations by confirming building availability and accessibility on shelter nights, serving as site experts on building/property issues, acting as liaison between B-SWERS Leadership Team and church staff, and managing building & property concerns related to the shelter. Site coordinators are B-SWERS first point of contact in the event of a site issue.

- First Christian Church Site Coordinator ~ Laurie Counsel, lauriecounsel@yahoo.com
- First United Methodist Church Site Coordinator ~ Fran Klinger, fling53@hotmail.com
- First Presbyterian Church Site Coordinator ~ Dan Watts, wattbush@gmail.com

The Laundry Coordinator organizes and oversees the transport of shelter linens between sites and Wheeler Mission as well as recruiting volunteers required for this transportation.

- Laundry Coordinator ~ Dan Watts, wattbush@gmail.com

The Leadership Team Coordinator coordinates the work of the whole Leadership Team and represents B-SWERS leadership in the community and among additional shelter providers in our city.

- Leadership Team Coordinator ~ Annette Hill Briggs, annettehillbriggs@gmail.com

Shelter Operation Overview

- All B-SWERS guests must be at least 18 years old.
- B-SWERS prioritizes women and transgender people when admitting guests because there are fewer shelter beds available for them in ALL local shelters.
- The shelter is open 8:30p.m.–7a.m. when overnight weather is predicted to be below 25 degrees or include precipitation dangerous to human survival.
- Generally 48 hours prior to such predicted weather, the B-SWERS Volunteer Coordinator will begin poll recruiting volunteers for the night/s in question. Should a pool of volunteers be available, the shelter will open and the guest community will be notified.
- Two paid staff are present every night; 8:00p.m.–9a.m.
- Volunteers are organized into 6 shifts for every night:
 1. Set-up
 2. Pre-check-in (new for this season)
 3. Check-in
 4. Overnight 1
 5. Overnight 2
 6. Clean-up
- Guests are admitted into the site beginning at 8:30 p.m. or when set up is complete, in a process called ‘check-in.’ At check-in, each guest provides a name and checks all personal belongings save what will fit in a grocery bag they are allowed to take into the sleeping room with them. No weapons, alcohol or drugs, or drug paraphernalia however tobacco and lighters are permitted in the sleeping room.
- Belongings taken into the sleeping room are inspected by a volunteer and guests are wanded with an electronic wand, assigned a mat and escorted into the sleeping room to

find their mats. 1-2 volunteers mark and move guests' personal belongings (luggage) into locked storage where it stays until checkout.

- Guests are offered coffee, tea, hot chocolate, and snacks when available.
- Two smoke breaks, around 10:15 p.m. and 6:15 a.m., are given each night.
- Male and female guests sleep in the same room but on opposite ends of the room.
- Guests are awakened early and must depart from the shelter and the Site property no later than 7 a.m.

Volunteer Requirements, Expectations & Duties

All volunteers must:

- **Read the *2025-2026 B-SWERS Volunteer Manual & Reference Guide***
- **Sign and return the *2025-2026 B-SWERS Covenant of Community Courtesy & Respect*** - located in Appendix ii, at the end of this Manual - to the Volunteer Coordinator
- **Attend** a 1-hour in-person or online B-SWERS training session. Shift leaders must attend the in-person training for administering naran and de-escalation practices.

Age Requirements:

- Volunteers age 17 and younger may only work Set-up Shift, 7:15-8:15 p.m. and only when accompanied by an adult.
- Volunteers age 18 and older may work all shifts.

Volunteer/Guest Ratios

- No fewer than two Volunteers should be on any given shelter shift. Should fewer than 2 volunteers arrive, the Volunteer Coordinator must be alerted immediately.
- No Volunteer should be alone with a Guest for any reason.

Nightly Shift Duties

Shelter Co-coordinators and Shift Leaders oversee the operations for one specific shift, providing the consistent application of B-SWERS policies and procedures. Other volunteers take assignments from the shift leader and report any issues to the shift leader. Co-coordinators communicate with host site coordinators, other shelters, Leadership Team and First Responders as necessary during their shift. Should decisions need to be made regarding guests' questions or removal, the Co-Coordinators' decisions are to be regarded as final.

The Shift Leader tracks any necessary information in the logbook which will be checked by CoCoordinators, host site coordinators and Leadership Team regularly. *Contact your volunteer coordinator or site if you need to cancel shifts you signed up to work.*

Shift Leaders should have served at least twice on a given shift before signing up to be shift leader, be familiar with this Volunteer Manual and with the host where they are serving, have training and be comfortable in de-escalation situations, and adapting to a changing environment. In normal situations, a Co-Coordinator will be present to handle the most difficult problems.

Please sign up to be a shift leader if you are ready and able to meet the above qualifications.

Other ***Shift duties*** depend on the particular shift involved.

Typical Nightly Schedule & Shift Duties

7:15–8:15 p.m. ~ Set-up Shift

- Volunteers arrive on site and sign into the Volunteer Log
- Set up sleeping room
 - Clear area needed for 35 mats & chairs laid out according to *guest sleeping map*
 - Empty all trash cans if needed and replace liners
 - Fold clean Shelter laundry if it is not yet folded
 - Set up mats and chairs
 - Set up coffee/snack areas by starting coffee, hot water and stocking cups, sugar, creamer, etc.
 - Verify restrooms are cleaned and stocked with paper, feminine hygiene and soap products
- Greet and brief arriving Pre-Check-in Shift volunteers
- Sign Out

7:15-10:15 pm - Pre-Check-in

- **Only experienced volunteers should sign up for this shift**
- Welcome & supervise guests waiting outdoors to be admitted at 8:30 pm
- Arrange the Guest Registration Table
 - Name tags & markers
 - Nitrile gloves
 - Guest Sleeping Map
 - Metal Detector Wand
 - Hand sanitizer
 - First-Aid kit
 - Sharps Container
 - Narcan supply
 - Guest Meds Container
 - Large trash bags
 - Grocery bags
 - Masking tape
 - Butt can
 - Smokes containers
 - Laptop & laptop charger cord
- Go over Primary Guest List & Incident Reports & make note who of may not be allowed to stay
- Continue assisting check-in shift with crowd management and arranging other beds for overflow guests
- Departs after check-in of all BSWERS guests is complete and overflow guests are assigned space elsewhere.

8:15–11:45 p.m. ~ Check-in Shift

- Sign in and receive instructions and volunteer assignments from the Shift Leader
- When set-up is complete and volunteers are ready, guests are admitted and asked to remain in the registration waiting area until they are called forward, one at a time, to be registered.
 - Distribute grocery bags to Guests to separate personal items to be kept with them in the sleeping room from luggage to be put into locked storage (*see shelter overview notes above*). **NOTE:** *Guests may keep coats and personal blankets.*
 - Inform waiting guests about shelter expectations and rules regarding respectful behavior toward volunteers and one another.

- Register each guest according to instructions detailed in the *Guest LogBook*
 - Women and trans guests are registered first, even if they arrive later than men who have already arrived. (*see shelter overview notes above*)
- Continue brewing more decaf coffee as needed
- Close registration table at **9:45 p.m.** Late Arrivals allowed at Shift Lead discretion
- Monitor restrooms and all areas guests gather approximately every 20 minutes or more frequently depending upon Guest temperament
- Shift Leader ~ record any relevant information or incidents in the log book for the next shifts and Leadership Team review.
- Welcome **Overnight Shift 1** volunteers and brief them on necessary information.
- Sign out

11:30 p.m.–2:45 a.m. ~ Overnight Shift 1

- Sign in & receive briefing from Check-in Shift Leader and read logbook notes.
- Register late arrivals if approved by Shift Leader
- Monitor beverage area and restock, as needed. Note any needed items in the logbook.
- Monitor restrooms and all areas guests gather approximately every 20 minutes or more frequently depending upon Guest temperament
- One volunteer must be in the sleeping room and awake at all times for security and to assist guests as needed.
- Volunteers must be alert to what is happening in the Shelter. If using computers they must be neither so engrossed in the computer nor unable to hear (if using earphones) that they are unaware of what is happening.
- Shift Leader ~ record any relevant information or incidents in the log book for the next shifts and Leadership Team review.
- Welcome **Overnight Shift 2** volunteers and brief them on necessary information.
- Sign out

2:30–5:45 a.m. ~ Overnight Shift 2

- Sign in & receive briefing from Overnight Shift 1 and read logbook notes.
- Register late arrivals if approved by Shift Leader
- Monitor beverage area and restock, as needed. Note any needed items in the logbook.
- Monitor restrooms and all areas guests gather approximately every 20 minutes or more frequently depending upon Guest temperament
- Brew **caffeinated coffee** at **3:30 a.m.**
- One volunteer must be in the sleeping room and awake at all times for security and to assist guests as needed.
- Volunteers must be alert to what is happening in the Shelter. If using computers they must be neither so engrossed in the computer nor unable to hear (if using earphones) that they are unaware of what is happening.
- Shift Leader ~ record any relevant information or incidents in the log book for the next shifts and Leadership Team review.
- Welcome **Check-out & Clean-up** volunteers and brief them on necessary information.
- Sign out

5:30–8:00 a.m. ~ Check-out & Clean-up Shift

- 5:30 a.m.
 - arrive, sign in & receive briefing from **Overnight Shift 2** and read the logbook.
 - begin waking guests who requested early wake-up at check in.
- 6:00 a.m. ~ Begin waking all guests, allowing 5 extra minutes to those who request it.

- 6:15 a.m. ~ Offer the morning smoke break. See note on smoke break procedures.
- 6–7 a.m.:
 - Assist guests in collecting and bagging their own sheets and blankets into the provided laundry bags for transport to Wheeler.
 - Assist departing guests by returning their stored personal items and checking their names off in the guest log.
 - All guests must be out of the shelter area and off of Site property by 7 a.m. (on Sundays a.m. at First Christian Church, guests may remain in the Great Hall or downstairs for Welcome Table Breakfast to begin, so long as they are not disruptive).
- 6:30–8 a.m. ~ Once guests are awake and departing, volunteers begin clean-up:
 - Sweep, mop and/or vacuum floors
 - Clean and restock restrooms
 - Empty all trash cans and replace liners
 - Restore all areas for routine, daily use (Note: if it is Sunday morning at FCC, assist staff with breakfast set up)
 - Place laundry bags in the designated location
 - Return registration area materials to the bins provided and the bins to their designated location at the site
 - Charge laptop
 - Sign out

Laundry Procedures ~ Shelter linens are washed (sanitized) and dried by the staff at Wheeler Mission, 215 S Westplex Ave, Bloomington. B-SWERS staff and volunteers are responsible for transporting the linens between Hosts Sites and Wheeler.

- **Set up Shift** Volunteers will find clean laundry in large blue bags in a designated area at each site.
- **Clean-up Shift** workers move bags of soiled laundry to the doors from where it will be loaded for transport to Wheeler by a B-SWERS staff member or volunteer.

Smoking Breaks

Smoking is strictly prohibited inside all B-SWERS Host Site facilities. This is a matter of state law and of Shelter Practice. This includes smoking of tobacco products and any other materials and includes electronic cigarettes (e-cig or e-cigarette), personal vaporizer (PV), or electronic nicotine delivery systems and similar devices. Any guest or volunteer found smoking in the building will be asked to stop immediately. Continuing to smoke inside the building may result in the loss of shelter or volunteering privileges.

- No smoking paraphernalia is allowed in the shelter sleeping area. Cigarettes, vapes, pipettes, lighters, matches, etc will be collected and marked with guests names at check-in, then made available at both smoke breaks.
- Two smoke breaks will be provided (10:15 p.m. and 6:15 a.m.).
- Smoke breaks are provided in designated areas only.

- Guests must be accompanied by a Volunteer on smoke breaks, but Volunteers should assess their own safety and comfort levels before agreeing to do so. No Volunteer shall be compelled to accompany a Guest on a smoke break if he/she feels uncomfortable doing so.
- When considering requests for smoke breaks, the Shift Lead must preserve the appropriate number of Volunteers inside the Site Facility at all times: at least 1 Volunteer to monitor the sleeping room, and 1 Volunteer to maintain the integrity of the secure storage space.
- Pets may be taken outside during smoke breaks and guests are expected to clean up after their pets while outside.

General Policies

Children

Children under 18 years of age are NOT permitted as Guests in the Shelter. Should a minor or guest with children arrive, call New Hope Family Shelter at 812.334.9840 and leave a voicemail. Wait one hour for a call back. If no call comes, call 911 and dispatch will get in touch with a New Hope caseworker.

Confidentiality of Information

Minimal amounts of Guests' personal data is collected by B-SWERS, including a first and last name, preferred gender, date of birth and special needs relevant to their stay in the shelter.

- We also record behavioral issues that may arise, supply needs, site-specific issues, and general observations. This information is stored digitally on our BSWERS laptop hard drives and on the cloud with password protection.
- This information will be used to ensure quality of service, to promote Guest safety, and to secure funding for current and future B-SWERS needs.
- Data from this program will be seen in full only by the Leadership Team, Site Coordinators, Shift Leaders, funding sources, and by other trained Volunteers on a *need-to-know basis*.
- This information is to be held in the strictest confidence, and shared otherwise only with the permission of the affected Guests or in cases of emergency.

Operating Hours & Quiet Time

- **All Sites shall open to Guests at 8:30 p.m.** or when the Check-in Shift is ready to receive them.
- **Guests may not line up at designated Site entrances before 8:00 p.m.** Guests who repeatedly arrive early will be warned and subsequently de-prioritized for registering.
- **All Sites shall close to Guests at 7:00 a.m.** Guests must leave both the Facility and Site property promptly at this time. Strict observance of closing time and total departure from Site property will help maintain the integrity of Sites' daytime services.
- **Guests' personal belongings are not to be left or disposed of on Site property.**
- **Quiet time shall begin at all Sites no later than 10:30 p.m.** Guests and Volunteers should be mindful of their noise levels at all times during quiet hours.
- Cell phone screens, video games, computers, or other light-generating devices, should be used with minimal disturbances after 10:30 p.m., and guests may be asked to put it away if it's causing a disturbance.

Food/Drinks

- **B-SWERS Host Sites and Leadership Team provide decaffeinated coffee, tea, hot chocolate and water** each night between 9–10:30 p.m. and each morning between 6–7:00 a.m.
- **Pre-packaged snack foods** are sometimes available to guests for free. Guests may also bring in their own food, snacks or non-alcoholic drinks with the understanding that no utensils, refrigeration, food preparation or food storage are available for Guest use.
- **Guests may bring in their own** non-alcoholic drinks and food and keep it in their sleeping space through the night so long as it does not interfere with other guests' rest.

Alcohol and Drugs

- **The use of alcohol or drugs** on the grounds or in the building of Host Sites is strictly forbidden.
- **Suspected drug or alcohol use** may be cause for action by a Staff Person or Shift Leader, based exclusively on the well-being and safety of others present and the restful atmosphere of the shelter environment.

Medications

Guests' personal over-the-counter and prescription medications may not be taken into the sleeping room. They are handled as follows:

- Secured in their personal items and stored in the locked area of the shelter site, marked with their name and mat number.
- Bagged, labeled and stored in the meds container on the registration table during check-in, accessible if needed and returned to a volunteer until morning. These meds should be recorded in the logbook so Check-out Volunteers know to return them to Guests.
- **Medications** include all prescription and over-the-counter medicines, such as Tylenol, cough syrup, sleeping aids, etc. If and when a Guest asks for access to medication, Volunteers shall verify what medication is requested and the Guest's name. The Volunteer will provide the Guest with the full medication bottle
- **Volunteers will not dispense medications themselves by providing single doses or pills to Guests per prescription instructions.** The Volunteer should request that the Guest take whatever medication is needed in the Volunteer's plain view and then return the medication to the Volunteer for secure placement at or near the registration table.

Pet Policy

PLEASE NOTE: Friends Place Shelter (919 S. Rogers St.) welcomes pets. They open at 5:15 p.m. Guests with pets larger than 30 pounds should seek shelter at Friends Place or make arrangements to board their animals with the Humane Society during severe weather.

- The following rules apply for all guests with pets:
 - Animals must weigh 30 pounds or less and be well-behaved, on a leash, and under the strict control of its owner at all times.

- Animals must be on a leash or in a crate at all times while on host site property.
- Pets should be up to date on recommended vaccinations before being brought onto Host Site property.
- Each guest with a pet is admitted individually by the permission of a Staff Person or Shift Leader. Said permission may be revoked at any time should shelter staff become concerned the pet is becoming fearful, aggressive, disruptive or the situation is in any way unsafe or unsanitary.
- Guests with larger animals should seek shelter at Friends Place.
- **Service Animals** are welcome to the B-SWERS as required by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) “Emotional Support” and “Providing companionship” are not recognized as a “service” for purposes of the ADA. Guests with service animals will be asked the following two questions:
 - Is the dog a service animal required because of a disability?
 - What work or task has the dog been trained to perform?

Security Procedures

- **Prior to registration at each Site**, Guests will be asked to remove all weapons, alcohol, and drugs from their persons and to secure them safely inside their backpacks, knapsacks, or other non-clothing items. Guests should not be allowed to hold up or to interfere with the screening and admission of other Guests.
- **Guests must surrender all luggage** and non-clothing items to B-SWERS Volunteers for secure holding during Shelter hours. Items may not be retrieved overnight from locked storage except at the discretion of a Shift Leader, Staff Person or Site Coordinator who must observe Guest’s access to their luggage. All personal belongings will be returned to Guests upon exiting the Shelter Site the following morning. **No Volunteer will be asked to have any contact with any weapons, alcohol, or drugs belonging to a Guest.**
- Should a guest choose to leave the shelter early, personal items removed from locked storage should be retrieved by a volunteer and carried to the site door before returning them to the Guest.
- Guests will be allowed to keep personal items they may need or wish to use during Shelter hours, provided the items fit within a small (e.g., plastic grocery sack) bag. Such items may include, but are not limited to, hygiene products, books, extra clothing, and games. Bags will be provided at registration. Backpacks no larger than provided grocery bags may be taken into the sleeping area.
- Prior to morning departure, Volunteers will distribute stored belongings by calling out the Guests’ names and mat numbers as written on the tape seal. For Guests leaving prior to the 6:00 a.m. wake-up call. Volunteers should verify mat numbers with names before handing over secured belongings.
- Guests' personal belongings are the responsibility of their owners and will not be stored by Host Sites when the shelter is not open.
- Guests must consent to the use of a metal detector security wand handled by a trained Volunteer. Guests who do not consent to the security screening will not be admitted to the Shelter.

Emergency Exits

- Emergency exits are to be used for emergency situations only, by Guests and by Volunteers.
- Appropriate use by Guests or Volunteers, includes exiting for fires or other emergencies that block usual non-emergency exits.
- Improper use includes exiting the Site for unauthorized smoke breaks or allowing unregistered guests into the shelter.

Late Arrivals & Early Departures

- **Early Departures** ~ Once registered, screened and assigned a bed, Guests who leave the Host Site may not return in the same night except in cases of medical emergency. Departing guests should take all personal belongings with them.
- **Late arrivals** ~ Our shelter is full nearly every night. Men arriving after 9:30 pm are encouraged to go directly to Wheeler Mission where beds are still available. Admission to the shelter after registration closes is decided on a case-by-case basis by the Shift Leader or Staff Person. If the shelter is full, the Shift Leader can attempt to secure a bed at another shelter and arrange transport.

Behavior Policies ~ The BSWERS Leadership Team is dedicated to providing a safe, comfortable environment for guests to rest and volunteers to serve. To that end, we strive to de-escalate situations peacefully, using outside assistance only as a very last resort. When such outside assistance is required, Co-Coordination (or in their absence, shift leaders) will request the help of the Stride Center Crisis team or local law enforcement. Of course, in a life threatening emergency - 911 should be called immediately.

Sexual Behavior Policy

- Guests or Volunteers overheard making inappropriate sexual comments or suggestions will be informed that such speech is inappropriate and must stop immediately. Should such speech continue, the person warned will be told to leave the shelter.
- Guests or Volunteers observed fondling himself/herself, the Guest will be instructed to stop immediately. Should the behavior continue, the person will be asked to leave. If the behavior continues, the person warned will be told to leave the shelter.
- Guests or volunteers observed exposing himself/herself or fondling someone else will be instructed to leave the Host Site immediately and will be suspended from the Shelter.
- If a Shift Leader is informed of a Guest's or Volunteer's inappropriate sexual behavior the Shift Lead or Site Coordinator will investigate the complaint and will discuss both the accusation and the Shelter's Sexual Behavior Policy with the alleged offender. If the behavior is repeated and/or confirmed by multiple credible sources, action consistent with the above three policies will be taken.
- Public displays of affection are inappropriate. Guests or Volunteers engaging in such displays will be asked to stop. If they do not, they will be asked to leave the Shelter.

Disruptive Behavior consists of words and actions by Guests or Volunteers that interfere with the peaceful, safe operation of the shelter. Depending on the severity of the behavior, guests and volunteers can be asked to leave the shelter for a certain amount of time or, in extreme circumstances, banned for the season.

Examples of Disruptive Behavior

- **Abusive language** ~ speaking to other guests or volunteers in ways that are unkind, threatening, inappropriate, disrespectful or hateful.
- **Destruction of Property** ~ mistreating or damaging the property of other guests, volunteers or Host sites.
- **Physical Violation** ~ touching another person, guest or volunteer, without their explicit consent.
- **Physical Violence** ~ touching another person, guest or volunteer, with the intent to cause bodily harm to them.
- **Impaired Consciousness** ~ exhibiting physical signs of inebriation, drug use, overdose or other illness that interfere with a person's, guest or volunteer, capacity to communicate with others or manage their own bodily function.
- **Incontinence** ~ chronically urinating, defecating or vomiting on shelter equipment or property without cleaning up after oneself.

Resolving Disruptive Behavior ~ Shelter Co-Coordinator and/or Shift Leaders have final say on all behavior issues. Such issues should be noted in the logbook in as much detail as possible to keep a record of repeat problems.

Potential Consequences to Disruptive Behaviors

- **Calm Down or Leave for the Night** ~ Guests or Volunteers who are disruptive or disrespectful of others may be offered the following options:
 - 1) to calm down and cease the disruptive behavior
 - 2) leave the shelter for the night
 - **Calm down** ~ removing oneself from the disruptive situation, choose to lay down, sit with volunteers, read, talk quietly, respect the quiet and safety of others.
 - **Asking Guests to leave** ~ collecting one's personal belongings and leaving the shelter for the night. Guests and Volunteers who leave willingly when told to do so may return the next night the shelter is open. Guests or Volunteers who refuse to leave the shelter for the night after having been told to do so are persisting in disruptive behavior and the Shift Leader's next step is to call 911 and request immediate police assistance in escorting the warned person from the shelter. They will not be allowed to return without making and keeping a day appointment with a Host Site Pastor to address and take accountability for the behavior and/or offer restoration.
- **Violent Speech & Behavior** ~ Abusive language and violence of any kind will not be tolerated. A Guest will be given one warning about abusive language. If the language persists, the Guest will be asked to leave the Shelter. Any threat or act or threat of violence will result in an immediate loss of Shelter privileges, potentially being permanently banned from the shelter.
- **Property Damage** ~ Guests or Volunteers who damage the property of other people may be asked to make restitution for the loss incurred or leave the shelter for the night. Repeatedly damaging property may result in suspension from the shelter for the season.

- **Incontinence** ~ Guests experiencing such chronic difficulty will be provided with the necessary products for managing it. Guests who refuse to use such products will not be admitted to the shelter. Guests who are able but unwilling to clean up after themselves will be asked to leave or refused admittance in the shelter.
 - **Impaired Consciousness** ~ Guests or volunteers who exhibit impairment will be taken aside and assessed to see if calling for an ambulance is warranted. Guests or volunteers found unconscious may receive doses of Narcan if Co-Coordinator or Shift Leader deems it necessary.
 - **Repeat Disruptions** ~ Guests or Volunteers who consistently require warnings or other disciplinary action will be informed that their behavior is unacceptable and will result in a loss of additional privileges such as being banned permanently or until agreeing to meet with a Host Site Pastor in order to address and take accountability for the behavior and/or offer restoration.
- **De-escalation Procedures** ~ Should the Shift Leader become aware of disruptive behaviors, escalating violence, or developing conflict between or among Guests and Volunteers, the Co-Coordinator or Shift Lead shall employ de-escalation practices covered in volunteer training to maintain calm and good order.

Appendix i

Tips for Volunteers

- Learn the names and faces of the other volunteers on your shifts. This builds and supports your service. Everyone is working hard and we are all here to serve!
- Find the shift(s) that offer what you are seeking in service. Earlier shifts offer more Guest interaction, while later shifts offer quieter time for reading and studying. Don't be afraid to try different shifts and different Sites to meet more Volunteers. We are a beautifully diverse community!
- The policies & procedures contained in this document and practiced in real time are developed based on past experience, consultation with Guests, Volunteers, and Site Coordinators. Failure to practice these procedures consistently creates confusion across all Sites which in turn interferes with our stated mission. If you have a question about a procedure or have ideas for improving the work, reach out to a member of the Leadership Team. We'd love to hear from you.
- Validate and encourage Guests by using their first names if possible. Acknowledge that our Guests are likely cold, tired, and lonely. Many Guests are suspicious of authority and may distrust acts of kindness
- Do not become personally attached to guests and do not allow them to become personally attached to you.
 - Do not share personal contact information with guests such as your last name, address, telephone numbers, email addresses, work place and when you are next scheduled to volunteer
 - Avoid socializing with them outside of Shelter hours.
 - Do not ask probing, personal questions. If Guests wish to share, just listen.

- Always treat all guests equally.
 - Do not offer assistance outside the scope of B-SWERS mission
 - Do not contact a referral agency for a Guest.
 - Do not provide transportation for Guests.
 - Do not lend or give money to Guests.
 - Do not offer to secure employment for Guests.
 - Never proselytize or promote religious beliefs. If Guests wish to share, just listen.
 - Never discuss our Guests in public places and respect their right to privacy.
 - In tense situations
 - Address the situation and the behavior, not the cause. Stay neutral and seek to de-escalate rather than solve the problem.
 - Avoid needless arguments, name-calling and disparaging remarks or accusations
 - Give some space Stand back approximately 4 feet allowing the Guest to not feel threatened or defensive. Never shine a light into anyone's eyes.
 - Ask others for help by quickly and calmly notifying the Shift Lead or motioning to another Volunteer if you cannot step away
 - Maintain your composure by speaking slowly and with clarity—quietly, with authority.
Take a couple of deep breaths and avoid putting your hands into your pockets
 - Change the environment by offering a smoke break if possible. Offer to move into a separate area to talk. Suggest moving the guest's mat to another location in the sleeping room. Distance often diffuses a problem.
 - Do not wait to call the police once it becomes clear a Guest is refusing to leave. Not doing so after informing them of the intent to call can result in future problems and possibly future harm to Guests, Volunteers, and Host Sites.
- Enjoy yourself.
 - Have fun.
 - Visit with Guests.
 - Be in community.
 - Wear a smile and introduce yourself to Guests and Volunteers alike.
 - Treat each other with respect and expect no less for yourself.
 - Practice Hospitality.

Appendix ii

B-SWERS 2025-2026 Covenant of Community Courtesy and Respect

- I have read the **2025-2026 B-SWERS Volunteer Manual and Reference Guide**
- I understand my roles and responsibilities as a Volunteer for the Bloomington Severe Winter Emergency Shelter.
- I agree to do my best to abide by the rules set forth here, to ask for help when I need it, and to abide by requests made of me by the B-SWERS Leadership Team.
- I understand that speech and/or behaviors that violate the guidelines set forth here or that interfere with the safe and restful environment of the shelter may result in me losing the opportunity to serve.

Signed, Name & Date