



Family Promise Volunteer Training

Family Promise, 2023, Family Promise Volunteer 102 Training, Coassemble, <https://family-promise.coassemble.com/preview/#/course/76400/overview>

Guest Families

- Families in a housing crisis: single-parent, dual-parent, same-gender parent, and grandparent or guardian-lead families are all accepted – The familial structure is specific to the household.
- Guests over 18 pass a background check before program entry.
- Guest families may have been financially fragile and encountered a crisis or may have a history of generational poverty – it's important NEVER to assume you know why a person is experiencing a housing crisis or to ask.

How do Guests get Connected to Family Promise?

- School teachers/counselors refer families
- Social service agencies within the community help families connect
- Community outreach programs share information
- Families find info online and connect



Understanding Shelter

When Family Promise was founded in 1988, the shelter program started as a rotational model, where families are hosted by community partners in different locations for a week on a rotating basis.

At their core, Family Promise Affiliates are extremely creative with leveraging existing spaces and resources to provide high-quality case management and trauma-informed shelter to families in need.

Rotational Model vs Static Site Model

The Rotational Model: In the evenings, volunteers and guests shared meals and slept at rotating host churches for a week at a time. During the day guests would go to work, search for housing or utilize the Promise Center (upstairs of the main office) for case management, etc. so they didn't have to be outside. Family Promise operated as a rotational model from 2015-2020.

Static Site Model: A single, fixed location (Portlight) for guests to sleep, eat, and receive services. Volunteers now come to Portlight to serve meals and engage with guests. Family Promise started utilizing a static site model in February of 2023.

Causes of Homelessness

For those who have never experienced homelessness, the path to losing your home can be hard to imagine. Many assume homelessness happens as a result of poor decision-making. The truth is far more complex and often comes as a direct result of our flawed, inequitable system.

Everyone has a unique path to homelessness, but what often connects people's experience is a lack of understanding, guidance, and services from institutions and individuals to prevent them from ending up there in the first place.

Causes of Homelessness Cont.

- Loss of Income and/or Employment
- Poverty
- Shortage of Affordable Housing
- Structural Racism
- Medical Emergencies & Personal Reasons

Poverty

The 2024 national poverty level for a family of four is \$30,000. With a lack of finances, families must make difficult decisions on where to allocate their limited funds.

With housing often taking up such a high percentage of income, it may have to go by the wayside in favor of necessities like food or healthcare.

There is a clear connection between poverty and homelessness that makes it difficult to overcome without assistance.



Shortage of Affordable Housing

Millions of families are housing-burdened and under-resourced. Missed paychecks or unexpected bills can fuel a crisis that can rob a family of their housing.

Evictions disproportionately impact families of color. Neighborhoods with more racial diversity continually experience higher rates of evictions, and people of color are overrepresented in the homeless population.

There are fewer and fewer available housing units for the most vulnerable families. The rising cost of housing puts stable living out of reach for too many families. The average minimum wage worker must work 79 hours per week to afford a one-bedroom apartment at the average fair market rent.



Fair Market Rent vs Ozaukee County Housing

Fair Market Rent: HUD guidelines for what units should cost. These numbers include rent AND utilities

- 1 BR: \$979
- 2 BR: \$1,170
- 3 BR: \$1,460

Ozaukee County Rentals: Average rental units on Craigslist without utilities

- 1 BR: \$949
- 2 BR: \$1,177
- 3 BR: \$1,896- limited availability

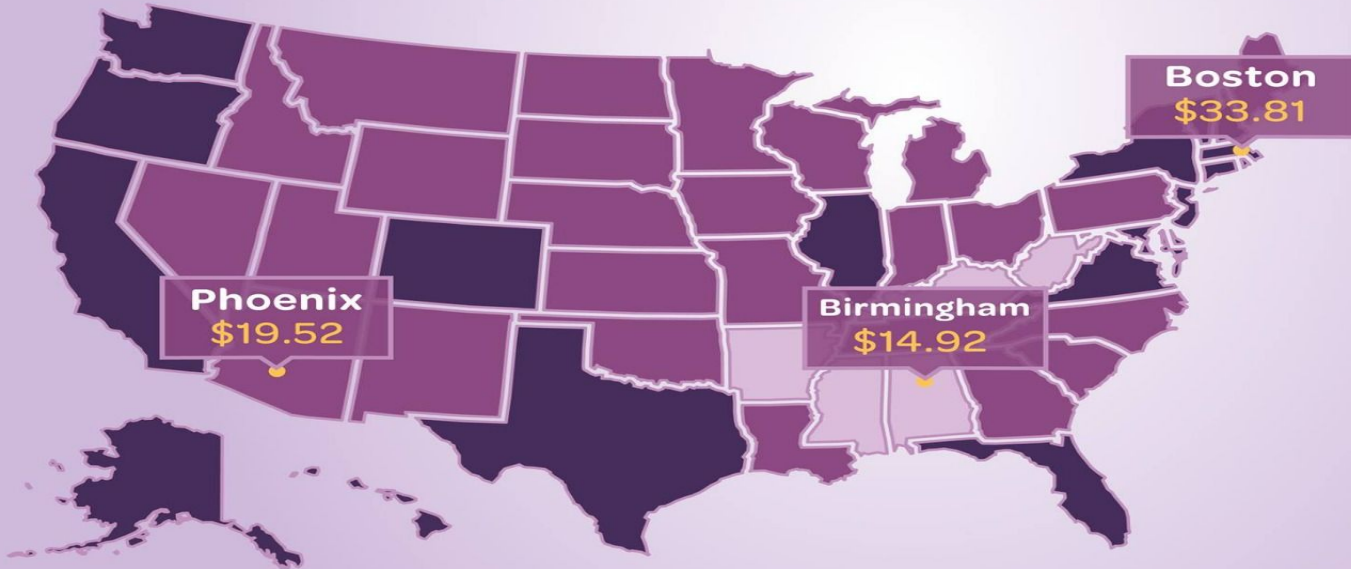


THE U.S. AFFORDABLE HOUSING CRISIS

Hourly wage required to afford a two-bedroom rental home by state.



Data via The National Low Income Housing Coalition



Most common jobs in the U.S.



Retail Salesperson
Avg. hourly wage: *\$13.61*



Food Service Worker
Avg. hourly wage: *\$10.64*



Cashier
Avg. hourly wage: *\$11.17*

Data via thestacker.com

Structural Racism

Redlining: a form of lending discrimination that has served as a building block for racial inequality in the United States since the 1930s.

While loans were being handed out to [mostly White] American families, the federal government created color-coded maps that told banks where they could give out housing loans. The red sections--typically where Black Americans lived -- were deemed too hazardous.

Redlining became illegal in 1968.

Hospitality Code for Volunteers

1. It's nice to hear your name, so learn the names of our guests, too.
2. Labeling people creates invisible barriers. Remember that guests are guests, not “the homeless.” Whether spoken or on a posted sign, labeling creates an automatic division, an “us” and “them” syndrome.
3. Personal questions can be tough to answer, so don't put guests in awkward positions. Give them the chance if they need to talk, but don't pry.
4. Never assume that a guest can't hear you. Do not discuss guests' situations with other people. Respect their privacy.
5. Everyone can use a little privacy. Our host sites become temporary homes for our guests.

Hospitality Code for Volunteers Cont.

6. Sometimes, we need to spend time alone. Respect guests' needs for quiet time by themselves or with family.

7. We all have bad days. Depression, sadness, and hopelessness may come. Allow guests space to deal with their emotions. And be prepared to forgive outbursts without judging them as ungrateful.

8. We understand and care for our children. Allow guests to do the same. Avoid contradicting guests' instructions to their children. Always ask parents' permission before giving things to children.

9. Parents need a break. Offer to read to, tutor, play with, and plan activities for interested children while their parents take a break.

10. Adult guests should be treated like adults. Although our guests are in a situation that may require them to be temporarily dependent on others, it does not mean that they are not an adult and able to make their own decisions.

Trauma

Always remember: entering shelter is traumatic. Family Promise works hard for guest's homelessness to be brief and nonrecurring.

Understanding Trauma

According to Trauma Support Services, trauma can be defined as the response to a deeply distressing or disturbing event that overwhelms an individual's ability to cope, causing feelings of helplessness and diminishing their sense of self and their ability to feel the full range of emotions and experiences.

Related, it is important to understand generational trauma, toxic stress, and racial trauma. Racial trauma can be defined as the ongoing result of racism, racist bias, and exposure to racist abuse.

As explained by Medical News Today, racial trauma can affect many aspects of a person's life, including their ability to have relationships, concentrate on school or work, and feel safe.

Trauma: The Three E's

- **Event:** a single incident or extreme threat or harm.
- **Experience of the event:** How an individual labels or assigns meaning to the event; the feeling of being overwhelmed, powerless or unsafe.
- **Effects:** The impact of the event on an individual, which may occur immediately or have a delayed onset. Some trauma issues can cause confusion, hyper-vigilance, nervousness, disconnection, isolation, and mistrust.

Childhood Trauma

Trauma-Informed and Resilience-Oriented Care requires an understanding of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and an appreciation that traumatic events for some individuals may have been repeatable, sustainable, and caused significant disruption to development.

ACEs are experiences within one's childhood that could be traumatic to the individual. Each adverse experience affects a child throughout their life, impacting their actions and lifelong health. The impact of ACEs can be prevented or lessened by community and family initiatives.

Examples of ACEs

- Experiencing violence, abuse, or neglect.
- Being a witness to violence in the home or community.
- An individual close to the child attempting or dying by suicide.
- Substance abuse within the household.
- Mental health problems within the household.
- Divorce that causes instability within the household.
- Instability due to the incarceration of a family member.
- Being in a homeless shelter

Trauma's Impact on the Brain

Adverse Childhood Experiences and traumatic events impact the healthy brain's development. The brain starts growing from birth and building individualized, responsive interactions. These are essential for optimal learning, behavior, and health.

Excessive and repeated stress like racial trauma and ACEs causes disruption in the brain architecture and impairs cell growth and interferes with healthy neural circuits.

The amygdala, which is the fight, flight, freeze, or surrender center of the brain can become overly reactive when there is chronic, toxic stress present.

This is an important reminder that people cannot just “control” their behavior if they have been exposed to constant trauma in their lives; there has been a chemical change in their brain that leads to changed behavior.

Trauma: The Four R's

Realize: The effects that trauma may have on an individual/ family /community.

Recognize: Identify signs and symptoms of trauma.

Respond: Appropriately to situations.

Resist Re-traumatization: Avoid it for guest families.

How to Support Someone Who Has Experienced Trauma



Dinner and Meal Preparation

Meal preparation and service varies depending on the person/ congregation. Below is a list of suggestions to be mindful of when serving:

- **Dietary Preferences & Restrictions:** The lead person serving the meal will receive a list of dietary restrictions and allergies from Portlight staff. From a health and safety perspective, it's very important to honor the list.
- **Meals:** In the same list, a description of previous meals will be outlined. This avoids shelter guests eating the same meal continuously. Please remember that adult and children guests may not be interested in eating the prepared meal. Please do not be discouraged if adult guests and children are not interested in eating the meal you prepared.
- **Serving Meals:** Please allow guests the opportunity to serve themselves. This is a reminder of their autonomy and control over portion size, etc.

Dinner and Meal Preparation Cont.

- **Privacy & Boundaries:** Some guests may choose to eat privately during mealtime. It's important to respect their privacy, they may not be feeling well or perhaps had a bad day. Either way, it's important to be mindful of guest's boundaries.
- **Gratitude:** Guest families always appreciate the meals volunteers prepare. However, some guests may not directly say "thank you" even though they are extremely thankful for the meal.
- **Hospitality & Engagement:** Providing hospitality to guests during mealtime is key. Interacting with guests is encouraged, but it's important to remember that mealtime is about the guests, not the volunteers.

Parenting Guidelines

- It is the right and responsibility of guests to parent their own children.
- Parents are responsible for their children.
- Ask permission before giving things to children or engaging them in an activity.
- What might have been viewed as effective parenting in past years may not be appropriate for raising children today. Please do not undermine a parent's authority.
- There are cultural variations in parenting beliefs and behaviors. It's important to be respectful of this.
- If a parent is having trouble, assess the situation and use your best judgment. You can offer to assist, but step back if they decline assistance.

Mandated Reporting

Family Promise has endorsed the National Association of Social Worker's Code of Ethics, which outlines mandated reporting for intent to harm self or others (duty to warn), or child abuse/neglect.

As a volunteer for Family Promise, if child abuse or neglect is suspected, a report must be made. Reports must also be made for intent to harm self or others. **Please report to the Advocate on staff.** This does not preclude volunteers who are mandated reporters in their professions from making independent reports.

Privacy & Confidentiality

- Do not discuss any information about guests with other guests.
- Leave all case management to Case Managers.
- Be sensitive about what you share with other volunteers.
- No specific family information should be shared with non-volunteers.
- Call Coordinator or Affiliate Director for guidance if you have questions.
- Volunteers should avoid confronting guests directly unless it's a life-threatening situation and immediate action needs to be taken.

Make Sure not to Overstep Boundaries

- Guests should **not** ask for or accept direct gifts (including money or items) from volunteers.
- Volunteers should make all gifts, including monetary ones, anonymously and via Family Promise staff.
- Volunteers may be tempted to share religious beliefs with guests. It is inappropriate, unless the guest specifically asks.
- You can invite guests to attend services or other congregational groups; **do not** push.

Boundaries and Barriers While in Program

- Volunteers should not share personal information such as their phone number with guests while they are in program.
- If a volunteer feels strongly about further assisting a guest in program, please contact a Family Promise staff member.

Engaging Outside of Family Promise

Engaging with guests while they are still within the Family Promise network is welcomed and encouraged. However, it's best practice for volunteers to **not** engage with guests once they are outside of the Family Promise network.

This includes volunteers interacting with guests outside the network on social media, via email, and telephone. If a volunteer chooses to have a relationship with a guest outside of the Family Promise network, the volunteer is solely responsible for any issues or challenges that may arise.

Emergencies

- Most Family Promise staff and Portlight Advocates are CPR certified
- Portlight has a first aid kit
- Portlight staff are trained in case of an emergency

