



## **VIRGINIA SUPPORTIVE HOUSING VOLUNTEER FAQ**

### **What is Virginia Supportive Housing?**

Virginia Supportive Housing (VSH) is a not-for-profit organization that ENDS homelessness by providing permanent housing and supportive services.

### **Is Virginia Supportive Housing a non-profit organization?**

Yes, Virginia Supportive Housing is a registered 501(c)3 non-profit organization (Tax ID# 54-1444564) that exists thanks to the support and engagement of the community.

### **How long has Virginia Supportive Housing been around?**

Virginia Supportive Housing was founded in 1988 under the name SRO Housing of Richmond. In 1999, VSH began serving families, and so to more accurately reflect its mission, the Board of Directors changed its name from SRO Housing of Richmond to Virginia Supportive Housing.

### **What kinds of programs & services are offered by Virginia Supportive Housing?**

Virginia Supportive Housing provides an integrated model that combines permanent affordable rental housing and robust supportive services.

- **Supportive Housing Properties:** VSH develops and manages permanent housing communities in Central Virginia, South Hampton Roads, and Charlottesville.
- **Scattered Site Housing:** Chronically homeless individuals, including those with a severe mental illness, and/or substance abuse and chronic physical disabilities are housed in scattered site apartments. Home-based supportive services are then provided through three programs -- *A Place To Start*, *HomeLink*, and *Shelter Plus Care*.
- **Supportive Services:** Robust supportive services, including case management, counseling, skills training and community building, are provided to enable residents to stabilize and maintain permanent housing.

### **Who are Virginia Supportive Housing's clients?**

The homeless individuals and families VSH serves represent the very lowest levels of income in our region (30% or less of area median income). This financial situation is often compounded by other challenges, including mental illness and physical disabilities.

## **How many clients are served by VSH?**

VSH currently serves more than 460 individuals in our housing properties, plus over 200 individuals in our scattered site programs.

## **What are some VSH successes?**

For over two decades, VSH has been a statewide leader in affordable housing and quality services for many of the community's hardest-to-serve populations. Four VSH housing developments (Heron's Landing, Gosnold, New Clay House, and Family Apartments) and one program (A Place To Start) have been recognized in recent years with the Virginia Governor's Housing Achievement award.

## **Isn't it expensive to meet the needs of the chronically homeless?**

Chronically homeless individuals cost taxpayers an average of \$100,000 annually because of their inappropriate, costly use of hospital emergency rooms, 911 services, temporary shelter programs, meal programs, and other social services. It is much less expensive to provide permanent supportive housing, and this integrated approach has a nationwide success rate among homeless populations of approximately 90%. VSH has a 96% success rate, which means that 96% of our clients do not return to homelessness.

## **How can I find out more about VSH?**

There are a variety of ways to find out more about the exciting work of VSH!

- Visit our web site at [www.virginiassupportivehousing.org](http://www.virginiassupportivehousing.org).
- Watch our video
- Sign up for our e-newsletter
- Like our Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/VirginiaSupportiveHousing>

## **How can I support VSH?**

Virginia Supportive Housing welcomes support from the community in the form of:

- Financial support
- Volunteerism
- Donated items such as food, clothing, and furniture

## **How do I get involved as a volunteer?**

All individuals applying to the volunteer program must submit an application, attend an orientation session, provide references, and complete a personal interview. Additional training and paperwork may be required for selected opportunities. Volunteer groups must complete a similar process before serving VSH.

## **Do volunteers have to complete a background check?**

Because VSH serves vulnerable populations, background checks may be required for any volunteer opportunities involving direct interaction with VSH clients. VSH is unable to

accept applicants with a criminal history involving convictions for offenses other than traffic-related violations (excluding DUI convictions).

### **Does VSH accept court-appointed volunteers?**

VSH accepts court-mandated service for traffic-related violations only.

### **What kind of time commitment is required for VSH volunteers?**

There is no mandatory time commitment for VSH volunteers. Time commitments are dictated by the specific volunteer opportunity, and are determined at the time of the interview and placement.

### **What kinds of things do VSH volunteers do?**

Three categories of opportunities are available for VSH volunteers: administrative support opportunities, property maintenance & beautification opportunities, and client service opportunities.

### **What if I don't want to interact personally with VSH clients?**

There are plenty of volunteer opportunities at VSH that do not involve direct client interaction. Volunteers can support the mission of VSH by giving their time in the administrative headquarters, or by joining a property maintenance/beautification project.

### **What if I DO want to interact personally with VSH clients?**

In order to participate with any opportunities that involve client interaction, volunteers must (in addition to submitting an application, attending an orientation, providing references, and completing a personal interview) authorize a criminal background check and attend sensitivity training. Volunteers who work with clients will be observed and evaluated for a minimum of ten hours of service before receiving authorization to perform unsupervised interaction.

### **Why are client-centered opportunities so structured?**

As a licensed mental health care provider and recipient of federal funding, VSH operates with oversight from the U.S. Department of Behavioral Health and is obligated to meet specific criteria pertaining to vulnerable client populations. Any volunteer engaging in direct interaction with clients must be informed of these criteria and must agree to operate within specified parameters. All incidents involving alleged violations of client rights will be referred to the U.S. Department of Behavioral Health for follow-up and investigation.

### **What volunteer opportunities are available for groups?**

VSH works with many different volunteer groups including high school and university service clubs, corporate teams, faith communities, scout troops, and civic groups. Property projects are perfect for volunteer groups. Groups may also conduct drives to

collect needed donations. Groups can also participate in client-centered projects upon completion of mandatory training.

### **What volunteer opportunities are available for youths?**

There are limited opportunities for individual youth volunteers as well as youth groups. Individual youth volunteers must be accompanied by parents or guardians for all opportunities. Youth groups can participate with supervised property beautification projects and, with adequate adult supervision, youth groups can also help to prepare and serve meals. Opportunities that do not involve client interaction are also suitable for youth groups. These opportunities include collecting donated items and sending holiday cards.

### **What volunteer opportunities are available for families?**

Families are welcome to “adopt” client families by providing holiday gifts, school supplies & backpacks, birthday presents and other needs. Families can also donate food items, cleaning supplies, paper products, board games, craft supplies, and clothing. Families may also participate in selected property beautification projects and direct client activities such as birthday parties and holiday meals.

### **Are there internship opportunities with VSH?**

Yes, VSH has relationships with all area universities to provide meaningful internship opportunities for students seeking to fulfill academic credits or simply gain professional experience. VSH also accommodates qualified AMERICORPS volunteers in both full- and part-time capacities.

### **How can I find out more?**

For more information on the VSH volunteer program, available opportunities, and the application process, contact the Volunteer Resources Manager at 804-836-1061 or [ajonesnassar@virginiasupportivehousing.org](mailto:ajonesnassar@virginiasupportivehousing.org).