



Outside Volunteer Guidelines & Expectations

Thank you for volunteering your time at **Ronald McDonald House Charities of Madison**. Your participation is essential in supporting our mission to provide a "home-away-from-home" for families with children receiving treatment at nearby hospitals. We appreciate the energy and enthusiasm you bring to our organization.

Before you begin, please review the following **guidelines and expectations** to ensure a positive, productive, and respectful experience for both volunteers and the families we serve.

General Guidelines

1. Arrival and Check-in

- Our House address for directions is 2716 Marshall Ct. Madison, WI.
- Volunteers should park in the surface lot next to the House where spaces are available. If the lot is full, please use street parking and be mindful of the 2-hour limit. Carpooling is strongly encouraged.
- Upon arrival, check in at the front desk. A staff member will provide necessary instructions and direct you to your assigned task.

2. Dress Code

- Wear comfortable clothing suitable for the tasks at hand. You may be asked to perform light physical labor, so closed-toed shoes are strongly encouraged.
- Do not wear clothing with offensive or inappropriate graphics or text.
- If you are involved in food-related activities, please wear disposable gloves (provided by RMHC-Madison).

3. Confidentiality and Respect for Privacy

- Do not take photographs of any individuals outside of your group, especially guest families, unless express permission has been granted by a staff member.
- Volunteers should not inquire about or share any personal health information about the families. Privacy is extremely important to RMHC and our families.

4. Health and Safety

- If you or anyone in your group feels unwell or has been in contact with someone diagnosed with an infectious illness (e.g., flu, COVID-19), please refrain from volunteering.
- In case of last-minute sickness or cancellations, please contact a staff member immediately at **(608) 232-4660**.

Communicating with Families and Supporting Them (In a Trauma-Informed Way)

At RMHC-Madison, families are often experiencing trauma, ranging from tragic events to moments of healing. If a family chooses to share their story, we ask volunteers to communicate in a **trauma-informed** manner. Trauma-Informed communication focuses on understanding the impact of trauma and responding with empathy, shifting from “What’s wrong with you?” to “What happened to you?” to better support them.

Trauma-Informed Communication Guidelines

- **Starting a Conversation:** A friendly “hello” and a smile go a long way. Be mindful of cues indicating if a family is open to interaction or if they need some space. Try to refrain from the typical conversation starter of “How are you?” unless you are ready to step into a potentially hard conversation. Instead, share your name and ask if you can get them anything.
- **Engagement:** Volunteers are encouraged to engage with families around the House. The conversations you have can sometimes be the only non-medical conversations a family has that day.
- **Active Listening:** Listen fully and attentively. Make eye contact, nod, and refrain from interrupting. Show that you are listening to understand, not to respond.
- **Withhold Judgement and Advice:** Avoid giving advice, sharing your own experiences, or minimizing their feelings. This is not about you but about supporting them through their unique situation.

- **Acknowledge Feelings:** It's important to validate a person's emotions, rather than trying to change how they feel. Let them know their feelings are legitimate.
- **Language Barriers:** If a family speaks a different language, you may ask to use the translation service available in the front office to assist in communication.
- **Further Support:** If a family requests counseling or professional help, refer them to front desk staff, who will connect them with the hospital's Social Work Department or another appropriate professional. RMHC-Madison does not provide counseling services.

Personal Boundaries

Volunteers are the face of RMHC-Madison, and it's essential to maintain safe and respectful boundaries for your safety and the safety of our guest families. Below are some suggestions to ensure proper boundaries are upheld:

- **Outside Contact:** Volunteers should not initiate contact with families outside of their shift or after they leave RMHC, including by email, phone, or social media.
- **No Personal Business or Resources:** Volunteers should not offer transportation, money, or gifts to families. Additionally, avoid showing preferential treatment toward any family.
- **No Sharing Personal Information:** Volunteers should not share their personal information, including phone numbers or addresses, with families.
- **Respect Beliefs:** Refrain from imposing your personal religious or political beliefs on families.
- **Reporting Concerns:** If you observe any concerns about a family's wellbeing that arise through observation or conversation, please bring these concerns to a staff member.
- **Boundary Violations:** If you feel that a guest is overstepping boundaries, please notify a staff member immediately.