

Astoria Drop-In Center Organizational Documents

Mission:

To provide a welcoming community center where low-income and homeless people can find a safe day-time place to be comfortable and find access to food, basic hygiene facilities, interaction, resources, and support services to help them transition toward self-sufficiency at their own pace.

Statement of Inclusion:

Our center is open to all residents and visitors of Clatsop County, especially those individuals or families who are unsheltered or unemployed. We include everyone regardless of age, gender, race, ethnicity, faith, culture, language, sexual identity, specific diagnosis, or identifiable issue. We are committed to preserving the dignity, humanity, and uniqueness of each person that we work with on their path back to economic, housing, and physical/mental/emotional stability.

What We Do:

We have a dedicated staff of volunteers and an Executive Director who make a difference in people's lives by focusing on building trusting relationships. We recognize that we need to meet safety and comfort needs first. Therefore we offer food, showers, bathrooms, laundry, and basic supplies to all guests as they enter the facility for the first time. We welcome comfort animals and provide for their needs.

We empower our guests by recognizing their right to choose their level of participation, never forcing or requiring contact or participation before they are ready.

- We orient guests to the different kinds of spaces that they can choose including: a quiet reading, computer, sitting space; an eating, socializing space; a TV, socializing space; a game room; a classroom space with scheduled classes.
- We visibly post our “Good Neighbor” guidelines which describe respectful behaviors, both inside and outside of the facility. Our volunteers are trained in respectful, consistent, and firm methods for addressing behaviors that threaten the safety and comfort of others.
- We foster connections between guests and our community partners whose programs also serve the homeless and low-income. We visibly post sign-up sheets for appointments with on-site social service agents, case-workers, and health care professionals.
- We visibly post volunteer opportunities to contribute to the various functions and activities of running the center. Center activities and services are managed almost entirely by volunteers.
- We visibly post opportunities for vouchers to receive keys to lockers, clothing, blankets, sleeping bags, rain gear, gas, transportation, motel rooms, bicycles, etc.

We partner with agencies and organizations that provide services to homeless and low-income people and invite them to provide some of these services in the drop-in center. (See list of partner commitments and list of potential partners.) With the participation of our partners, we

- serve lunch daily and have snack food and drinks available through-out the day;
- host social events and activities such as picnics, birthday parties, and celebrations to recognize successes;
- offer a variety of classes on-site related to personal skill-building, problem-solving, information on how to navigate various services, healthy self-care practices, or job-related skills;
- help guests to obtain valid ID;
- train interested guests in performing volunteer functions that support the center;
- provide case managers, mentors, advocates, counseling, health care and other professional services on-site.

Our Core Values:

The program philosophy is the foundation of the drop-in center, and all decisions regarding the structure and programs within the center are based on this philosophy.

Unconditional Positive Regard. Engagement and re-integration is considered a by-product of the development of trust, interpersonal connection, and unconditional positive regard ([Rogers, 1967](#)). According to Rogers, to treat an individual as worthy and capable, even when the individual does not act or feel that way is unconditional positive regard. Moreover, trust and unconditional positive regard are at the root of all humanistic striving for happiness and social connectedness and underlies most schools of psychotherapy. Those who are homeless have lost trust with nearly everyone of importance to them and have lost trust in the larger social system ([Ensign & Bell, 2004](#)). The development of a genuine, empathic relationship with unconditional positive regard between the guest and a drop-in service worker may be the most important motivator of change and is the basis of the program philosophy endorsed in this center.

Interagency Collaboration. An effective program for the homeless must foster interagency collaboration given the multiple needs of those experiencing homelessness and scarce community resources. Therefore, we co-create a shared environment at the center to foster wraparound, intensive, individualized case management. The guest is supported in developing a strength-based, single plan of care cuts across all agencies and providers. This plan is developed, and changed when needed, to meet the needs of the guest. Further, the case workers and service providers come into the safe and familiar community center space to meet their clients rather than sending already disempowered clients all over the county to track down and figure out the complex processes of each individual agency.

Potential Partners			
Agency	Contact Person	Phone	Status
Clatsop Community Action and Food Bank	Elaine Bruce	ebruce@ccaservices.org	
Clatsop Behavioral Health	Amy Baker	amyb@clatsopbh.org	
Clatsop Community College	Leah Olson, Workforce	503-338-2408 lolson@clatsopcc.edu	

	Training Mindy Stokes, Lives in Transition	mstokes@clatsopcc.edu	
NOHA			
Veterans Administration	Patrick Preston	Patrick.C.PRESTON@oregon.gov	
Columbia Memorial Hospital			
Astoria Warming Center	Bruce Williams Bill Van Nostran	b42w@mac.com pastorbill@fpcastoria.org	
Oregon Law Center	Ellen Johnson	ellenj@gmail.com	
Filling Empty Bellies	Erin Carlsen	eringracefree@gmail.com	
Riverfolk	Mary Docherty	surroundingyouinlight@hotmail.com	
Helping Hands Re-entry	Raven Brown	r.brown@helpinghandsreentry.org	
TEAM (or other job placement service provider)			
Northwest Senior and Disability Service			
Astoria Police Department	Kenny Hansen	khansen@astoria.or.us	

Application of Intent to Partner with the Astoria Drop-in Center for Homeless

Date: _____

Name of Organization: _____

Contact Person: _____ Phone: _____ Email: _____

This letter is an official request of this organization to partner with the Astoria Drop-in Center for Homeless in the following ways as checked below:

___ Provide professional services in the Drop-in Center facility to people who are homeless
___ hours and ___ days per week/month _____
___ use a private office and pay \$ _____ per month
___ meet with clients in a public space in the Drop-in Center facility and pay \$ _____ per month

___ Conduct daily/weekly/monthly seminars about our services at the Drop-in Center facility
Contact: _____ Phone: _____ Email: _____

___ Provide literature describing our location and the services we provide

___ Provide a sign-up sheet for appointments to be conducted at our agency location
Contact: _____ Phone: _____ Email: _____

___ Provide a representative to serve on the Drop-in Center Board of Directors
Name: _____ Phone: _____ Email: _____

___ Provide a representative to attend periodic Advisory Committee meetings
Name: _____ Phone: _____ Email: _____

___ Use our organization name as an official Partner in literature, grant applications, and other material developed by the Drop-in Center

___ Include resources for the Drop-in Center in our grant applications and funding requests
Contact: _____ Phone: _____ Email: _____

___ Donate materials, furniture, other items specified _____

___ Other: _____

Good Neighbor Agreement:

1. Commitment to our neighbors - The Drop-in Center will:
 - a) Comply with all applicable laws and regulations, including state and local fire regulations, non-discrimination laws, and the Americans with Disabilities Act.
 - b) Contribute to safety and well-being by treating every community member with respect.
 - c) Communicate directly and productively when questions, problems, or differences arise, and resolve concerns at the lowest possible level.
 - 1) Provide a messaging system for complaints only, to which the center will respond within 24 hours (Post on website for how to contact the center).
 - 2) Respond in a direct and timely fashion if concerns arise. During open hours, the center phone will be answered immediately by staff if possible.
 - 3) Utilize face-to-face or telephone communication whenever possible to maximize understanding. Exercise caution in communicating via e-mail or similar methods in conflict situations.
 - d) Report crime to police.
 - e) Make concerted efforts to support guests' accountability and personal responsibility through frequent guest education. These sessions will cover:
 - 1) Center policies regarding behaviors noted in "2. Guidelines for Behavior in the center and in the neighborhood" below.
 - 2) Respectful treatment of fellow guests, staff/volunteers, the neighborhood, and Astoria in general.
 - f) The center will provide regular neighborhood listening sessions quarterly in the first year of operation and twice a year thereafter.
 - 1) Mailed notice will be provided at least three weeks in advance to building owners and residents in the immediate area.
 - 2) Flyers will be posted in public places and announcements made on social media.
 - 3) Residents and business operators may sign up to receive notices of neighborhood meetings by contacting the center at any time.

2. Guidelines for Behavior in the center and in the neighborhood

We are guided by the values of safety, respect, and responsibility. In order for the center to continue to be able to offer services, we ask that guests respect our inside space and the surrounding neighborhood by honoring the following guidelines. Thank you for partnering with us to ensure that our community is respected, and we can continue to offer drop-in center services.

1. No drinking or drug use
2. No illegal activity or hostile behavior of any kind
3. No camping - either with a bedroll or in a vehicle
4. No loitering or congregating on center property before, during, or after opening hours
5. No parking or hanging out in neighboring parking lots or on surrounding private property

Hours of Operation:

The center is open daily from 9:00am to 6:00pm. Winter hours may be extended to remove the gap between the operating hours of the Astoria Warming Center.

Membership:

Membership is not required in order to use the center. Non-members are referred to as “drop-in guests.” There is no limit to how long or how often a person remains a guest and there is no pressure imposed on any person to become a member. Becoming a member has as much to do with meeting a human being’s need to belong to a community as it has to do with our desire to serve and encourage engagement in center activities. When a guest agrees to become a member, it signifies to us that we have established a sufficient level of trust and relationship for the person to want to be a member.

A member is added to the membership list; they receive a name badge; they have access to a locker, if available; they can participate in the barter system; they are eligible to become a volunteer, if they are interested; their birthday is celebrated as well as other accomplishments and successes. Members are invited to attend regular “How are we doing?” feedback meetings where they can voice their views on what needs we are meeting well and what needs of theirs are not adequately addressed.

Outcome Measures:

Consistent with our intention to support self-empowerment, we collect and report data appropriate to the level of participation chosen by each guest. Data collected by levels of participation are as follows:

- 1) Drop-in with no name. We log the nature of the interaction and the services the person accessed. If we can, we log how long the person stayed in the center and any interaction or behavior that we observed.
- 2) Drop-in with name. We log the name, nature of the interaction and the services the person accessed. If we can, we log how long the person stayed in the center and any interaction or behavior that we observed.
- 3) Repeat visit. We invite them to become a member. We log the nature of the interaction and the services the person accessed. We invite the person to log out or log out for them and we log any interaction or behavior that we observed.
- 4) Regular member. We engage the person in sharing their successes. We celebrate them publically if they are comfortable doing this. We invite them to become a contributing member (volunteer). We log the nature of the interaction, the services the person accessed, and their successes.
- 5) Contributing member. We train the member to do the volunteer job(s) that interests them as well as training in how to relate to behavior issues that may arise, and they are added to the work schedule. We engage the person in sharing their successes and celebrate them publically. We log their successes.

Funding:

The annual operating budget will depend on the cost of a lease, whether we operate under an umbrella agency, the number of hours we are open, and the extent of the program that we are able to implement. A very basic operating budget is provided here as a place holder.

Estimated First Year Operating Budget		
Executive Director	\$43,472	\$19/hr * 40 hrs/wk plus 10% employer costs
Lease/Purchase	\$30,000	\$1.00 * 3,000 sq.ft. per month
Utilities	\$3,000	10% of rent
Trash Service	\$1,200	
Facility upgrades	\$50,000	Any upgrades needed to provide adequate kitchen, bathroom, showers, and laundry facilities
Furnishings	\$30,000	Dining tables & chairs, "library" tables & chairs, lounge chairs, etc. from Thrift stores and donations where possible
Liability and D&O Insurance	\$2,500	
Food	\$15,000	
Kitchen Supplies	\$600	
Laundry & Janitorial Supplies	\$600	
Office Supplies	\$600	
Accounting Services	\$500	
Telecommunications	\$300	
TOTAL	\$177,392	

Building Location:

Ideally, the drop-in center should be in a location which homeless individuals can easily access, or be near the area in which they tend to congregate and near public transportation. Accessibility is tied not only to location, but to how the actual physical location is developed, the level of safety an individual feels within the community, the responsibility individuals feel and believe others feel for that location, and the level of “buy in” the people who inhabit the area have for that location. The drop-in center needs to be in a neighborhood where a homeless person will not be treated as an alien or an outsider simply by appearing on the street. The drop-in center needs to be an integrated part of the neighborhood where it will eventually be seen as a positive addition. The drop-in center should not change the landscape of the community, and is probably best housed in an existing structure.

Collaboration between the drop-in center and the community will ensure a win-win situation for the community as well as for the homeless. This center will help the community to accept its presence by upgrading a derelict building, by maintaining the appearance of the building and the grounds surrounding the building, and by having participants take ownership and responsibility for the impact on the neighborhood. Members of the drop-in center will engage in community service projects such as litter patrols and other projects that will improve the overall community. Drop-in center representatives will invite the neighborhood community to regular feedback meetings to create a dialogue for developing a collaborative relationship and ameliorating concerns among neighbors of the center.

Organization of the Center:

Homeless individuals are in various stages of motivation for change, from eager and willing to unmotivated for change. The drop-in center does not place requirements on what a guest must do while at the center. Many social activities, educational classes, services, and amenities are available and publicized but are not required in order to access the drop-in center. Instead, it is more important in the beginning stages of interaction that guests make a connection with the drop-in center and its staff. Programs serving the homeless should initially be flexible and non-demanding. The guests need to feel safe and feel that staff are trustworthy. Guests will be more likely to begin the reintegration process when they feel this connection (unconditional positive regard) with a person that is willing to help them with their goals, whatever they may be. The drop-in center’s first priority is to provide food, showers, washing machines, clean clothes, and some access to health care. An important aspect of providing these basic needs is to allow the individuals to maintain dignity.

The drop-in center is organized into several rooms rather than having just one large open room available for use. Separation of the building into activity rooms allows less crowding in one room and also offers the opportunity to reduce conflict among those guests who otherwise do not get along with each other. The separate rooms are also important so that the drop-in center might more resemble a secure base (such as one might find in a family) rather than a more antiseptic public atmosphere. The use of structured rooms also creates the opportunity for individuals to work towards improving their life situation in an atmosphere that promotes dignity.

Separate rooms provide a choice among a variety of different types of space to meet a variety of needs of the guests, from quiet to conversational, from eating to recreation, and from individual studying to group interaction. Thus, when a guest enters the drop-in center, they sign in using whatever name they wish to protect confidentiality, and they pick a room to participate in activities or to rest. Potential activity rooms include GED preparation and literacy tutoring, job finding and interview skills building, an art room for emotional expression, a quiet room for rest or reading, and a TV/game room. Each room will be staffed by a volunteer member to provide positive interaction with the guest and to ensure appropriate prosocial activity and safety of guests.

The drop-in center will also offer guests access to advocates, case workers, and other providers who offer services that can assist them in the realms of housing, health, education, legal or other service areas. Virtual classrooms can be offered onsite using computers available at the drop-in center. Workshops are offered which address resume building, tips for completing applications, and interviewing skills.

The rules and reward system of the drop-in center create a set of expectations, consequences and rewards. Rules, consequences and the reward system are developed by the Executive Director, volunteer staff, and guests using a “self-management” philosophy. These are reviewed with each new guest who enters the center so that they are aware of expectations, they are not surprised by a consequence, and they know what they need to do to earn a reward, such as a barter system. All volunteer staff receive training on the rules, consequences and rewards so that consistency among staff is assured. Rather than creating a system of punishment and consequences, the staff work together to create a system of success that helps guests develop and learn appropriate behavior. Center staff will develop a plan for determining the level of immediate intervention required that considers individual guest factors and the need to balance guest needs with the safety needs of the staff and other guests.

Administration and Staffing:

Board of Directors: The drop-in center is administered by a volunteer Board of Directors which has legal responsibility for ensuring adequate funding and operational effectiveness of the center. The Board is responsible for hiring and supervising an Executive Director.

Advisory Board: The volunteer Advisory Board is made up of individuals with particular expertise in any aspect of the mission of the center. The Advisory Board will meet as needed as well as providing individual advice on request regarding operations, organization, fund raising, networking, and on any other issues that may arise. Members of partnering organizations, and organizations that provide some on-site or off-site service to the center guests through classes, clinics, case management, referrals, etc., may want to have a representative on the Advisory Board. Other members of the Advisory Board may be neighbors, influential community members, police officers, members of the Downtown Merchants Association, or service clubs.

Volunteer Staff: Most staff functions will be performed by volunteers that come from the membership of the center. These positions provide an opportunity for members to advance in responsibility, engagement, and respect. As a self-managed organization, guests have a pathway

for positive empowerment as well as relating to staff who have “been there” and understand their world.

Executive Director: The ED is responsible to the Board of Directors for financial management and reporting, grant writing, fund raising, community relations, safety compliance, partnership relations, volunteer staff, and the overall functioning of operations. This person serves as the direct supervisor of the drop-in center staff. This person is responsible for setting the tone of the center that is consistent with the mission and values of the center. Of primary importance is the philosophy and comfort level of the individual in working with those who are experiencing homelessness. The ED will be responsible for training volunteer staff. Trainings include how to implement the behavior rules, consequences and rewards system, de-escalate conflict, handle job stress and maintain professional boundaries with people who may be friends outside of the center. The ED will also advocate and be responsible for ensuring the inclusive delivery of services, providing training to staff in cultural competence (e.g., ethnic/racial, sexual orientation, sexual identity and gender competencies).

When interviewing a potential Director, it will be important for the Board to determine whether s/he will be comfortable with the center philosophy and activities, and with interacting with the guests themselves. Worst case scenarios should be presented to potential hires so that they have a realistic idea of what to expect from the position. The philosophy of the individual regarding the homeless should be assessed for compatibility with a “come as you are” program which allows guests to enter regardless of their clean and sober status.

References:

1. Ensign J, Bell M. Illness experiences of homeless youth. *Qualitative Health Research*. 2004;14:1239–1254. [\[PubMed\]](#)
2. Rogers CR. Toward a modern approach to values: the valuing process in the mature person. In: Rogers CR, Stevens B, editors. *Person to person: The problem of being human*. New York: Pocket Books; 1967. [\[PubMed\]](#)