



MEALS on WHEELS
SAN FRANCISCO

VOLUNTEER HANDBOOK

Please note this Handbook was created prior to the COVID-19 crisis. While a majority of the content is still relevant, please note certain areas are highlighted indicating the changes made during this crisis.

Together, we can deliver.

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Welcome

Dear Volunteer,

Welcome to the Meals On Wheels of San Francisco family! Our agency is committed to the belief that all seniors have the right to live independently in their homes for as long as safely possible. Our staff and our volunteers are both integral parts of achieving this mission, and we value the time and commitment you make to serve our clients, and we encourage your feedback and your opinions on how to continuously improve our client support.



As a MOWSF volunteer, you help us “nourish the whole person” through direct services that alleviate isolation, ensure safety, and guarantee independence. Meals are our calling card, but we do so much more than deliver meals. Our promise to provide daily human contact to seniors is fulfilled through our meal delivery, safety checks, social work, and through the equally important support that our volunteers provide through the Good Neighbor Program and the Home Delivered Grocery Program. In addition, the support our volunteers provide through administrative assistance and helping with special events better enable us to fulfill our commitments to San Francisco seniors.

Our volunteer training is designed to give you the tools and support to help MOWSF alleviate senior hunger and isolation in San Francisco. Together, we can achieve the common goal of providing seniors with the support they need to live with dignity, stay in their homes, and remain connected with their community.

Thank you for choosing to volunteer with MOWSF to ensure that all San Francisco seniors thrive. I wish you much success and enjoyment in your volunteer work and look forward to meeting you at future volunteer events.

Together, we can deliver.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ashley C. McCumber".

Ashley C. McCumber
Executive Director

MOWSF Overview

Our Organization

Founded in 1970, Meals on Wheels San Francisco began as a grassroots movement of local community members, looking out for their elderly neighbors by preparing meals in neighborhood kitchens and delivering them to seniors across San Francisco.

Today, MOWSF is an independent, local organization that operates from our office and industrial kitchen in Bayview/Hunter's Point. MOWSF is a member of Meals on Wheels America which provides advocacy and program support but no financial funding.

MOWSF strives to alleviate food insecurity and loneliness experienced by seniors who want to stay in their own homes but can't shop or prepare meals for themselves. Supporting these efforts are 75 full-time staff, including 30 employed drivers, 12 social workers and three full-time nutritionists. MOWSF employees to provide the following services to nearly 4,000 seniors in San Francisco:

Home Delivered Meals: Homebound seniors can receive two meals per day, up to seven days a week, which are nutritionally tailored to meet the dietary needs of our senior clients. We prepare more than 2 million meals each year.

Safety checks: With each delivery, our drivers check on the health and well-being of our clients, referring any unusual circumstances to our social workers for follow-up.

Nutrition Counseling: Registered dietitians provide more than 1,800 hours of nutrition counseling each year, to help educate and keep our clients healthy.

Social Work: We conduct more than 3,000 client visits a year, to check on the safety and welfare of clients. We provide additional support by phone, and assist clients with obtaining support from other agencies as needed.

Intensive Case Management: MOWSF provides focused social work to more than 100 clients per year, in the event of emergencies or personal crisis.

Volunteer Services: Beyond meal and grocery delivery, volunteers offer homebound seniors compassion and support as well as cleaner, safer living spaces to enhance their quality of life.

The Volunteer Department

As a volunteer, your routine interactions with the MOWSF organization will likely be through one or more of our volunteer department members.

Depending on the role and the program(s) you're involved in supporting, they'll help to make sure that you have the resources you'll need to best assist our clients and they will help you resolve an issues that may arise.

The volunteer department includes

Kathy Stirling, Director Volunteer Programs Corporate Engagement kstirling@mowsf.org
Role: Corporate Volunteers, Events, Community Groups

Nancy Fisher, Manager of Volunteer Programs nfisher@mowsf.org
Role: Volunteer training and onboarding, Friendly Visitor and Social Call Program, Client Needs Program & Grocery Shopper program

Stephanie Galinson, Manager of Volunteer Programs sgalinson@mowsf.org
Role: Home Delivered Groceries

Maggie Shugerman, Volunteer Coordinator mshugerman@mowsf.org
Role: Home Delivered Groceries, Card Program

If at any point, you need urgent or immediate assistance and the Volunteer Staff that you are trying to reach is unavailable, contact the MOWSF Volunteer Department (415) 343-1286.

Working with Seniors

An Appreciative Vision of Aging and Elderhood

If we saw seniority as the last and most profound phase of human development, rather than as a period of decline, would that, change our treatment of the elderly and our own fears of aging?

MOWSF focuses on the realities of meeting the concrete needs of seniors. Our volunteers are a vital part of that healing mission and the expanding movement to re-imagine aging.

Because we deal mainly with people in the last stages of life, clients are often dealing with loss – loss of family, friends, independence, mobility, memory, etc. -- which understandably creates discomfort and pain at times.

However, this phase of life can still be a time of human growth even during this loss – we can see the dignity, wisdom, and honor that seniors have even as they cope with dementia, serious illness, or mental distress.

MOWSF volunteers give the gifts of friendship, comfort, compassion, human dignity, and respect. As you assist and care for seniors, you'll also they have the chance to face your own concerns and fears about aging, discovering acceptance, humility, and gratitude for aging as you accompany others in this phase of life's journey.

Cultural Sensitivity and Competence

Our MOWSF clients represent the diversity of San Francisco itself, with various ethnicities, races, sexual orientations, religions, economic classes, political views, languages, customs, and more. It is extremely important that MOWSF volunteers are both culturally sensitive and seek to be culturally competent.

Cultural sensitivity is making a proactive effort to be aware of the potential and actual cultural factors that affect your relationships with others. Cultural differences and similarities simply exist – without a value, not positive or negative, better or worse, right or wrong.

Cultural competence is the ability to work effectively with individuals from different cultural and ethnic backgrounds than your own. It includes understanding the language, culture, and behaviors of other individuals and groups, as well as having particular knowledge, skills, attitude, and awareness to effectively interact with others.

Our volunteers often first encounter cultural differences in simply interacting with clients from an older generation. Some discover quickly that habits, cultural references and what constitutes “politeness” may be very different for these seniors.

Volunteers are often matched with seniors from different ethnic or racial backgrounds, or different sexual orientations than themselves. In addition to cultural sensitivity, you can pursue cultural competence by finding out more about the senior's culture, sometimes by directly

asking or engaging the client, if they are willing. For instance, attending a Chinese banquet, event, or festival with a Chinese senior, or going to the Pride Parade with a gay senior, can be a great way to grow cultural knowledge and deepen relationship. Alternatively, simply asking about and discussing special cultural events, like Cinco de Mayo, Hanukkah, Ramadan, etc. You can often help the client celebrate their own culture, even in a small way, by doing some simple online research (or ask for assistance from the Volunteer Department).

Some clients may choose to be very private about their culture and their life in general, so it is always good to “sound out” the client’s receptiveness first, and proceed from there.

Communication Best Practices – training is now required for new volunteer programs –see pg. 15 Volunteer Roles

1. Make the First Contact -

Good Neighbor volunteers should call their clients within one week of being matched to schedule a “first meeting” as soon as possible. After that, you and your client will jointly develop a plan for how often to visit or talk by phone. Generally, you should schedule visits with clients at least two days in advance, but for ongoing visits, you and your client(s) will determine what works best for each of you.

The greatest volunteer’s gift is usually “unhurried time,” so try to plan your visits when you will not have other time pressures or other demands on your mind.

2. Be on time, or if you must be late or cancel, let the client know.

Clients often have little else going on in their day and will generally be anticipating your visit. Please try to be prompt, and attempt to communicate to them any schedule change as soon as you can.

3. Establishing Rapport and Practice Active Listening

Many elderly or disabled people struggle with hearing, reading, writing and general communication skills. We cannot verbally or non-verbally communicate with them the same way we do with our peers. It is important to understand that as people grow older, they often become more difficult to understand and changes in their environment may influence their communication.

Rapport refers to a feeling of harmonious connection between people. It is a commonality of perspective, being “in sync” and at ease with the person with whom you are talking. It is the most satisfying state for two people engaged in a conversation.

Try to	Avoid
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • maintain eye contact, and speak clearly and directly to them 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • communicating quickly or providing hurried instructions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • communicate as simply as possible using small words, short sentences, and visual aids 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • doing all of the talking, or interrupting
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • re-state key ideas of the topic frequently, or have clients write down future appointments or “to do” items that they might want to follow-up on after your visit 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • giving advice, unless asked for an opinion • arguing or attempting to instill your logic, even if you each hold strong but differing beliefs

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • have them restate back to you any agreements that you make 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • use “open” questions to draw the client into conversation 	

As you work with clients, these skills become natural – and as you do in any work or social setting, you will develop specific ways to communicate effectively with each unique client that you will work with.

Boundaries: Sustainable Volunteering

As a volunteer, you will work with people with many needs – often, more than any volunteer could ever meet. As in all relationships, challenges can arise around misunderstandings, ordinary mistakes, and differing expectations. Knowing how to maintain your boundaries as a volunteer is an essential aspect of a successful volunteer-client relationship.

- Be clear with your client what you can do. When considering anything that is not required of you as a volunteer, do only what is sustainable for you and your lifestyle.
- Your volunteer role is about decreasing senior difficulties and improving quality of life, not trying to fix or remove problems.
- Focus on what you can do for them, not on what you are not doing.
- Try to maintain boundaries that another volunteer would be able to step in and continue in your absence.

Health Issues Affecting Seniors

Many health issues regularly arise in the later part of life, including memory loss, depression, and physical frailty, loss of vision or hearing. In addition, other natural illnesses.

Even if you have experienced these issues yourself or in loved ones, do not attempt to advise your client on health issues. Your role is to be a companion and friend, not a medical expert.

If the client’s health issues become of specific concern that social work or health intervention is needed, or if issues interfere with your ability to assist or become more than you can handle, please contact the Volunteer Department immediately.

Emotional Resiliency: Dealing with Grief

While most volunteers experience great joy and satisfaction from their client interactions, some see their clients experience suffering. Aging can present many losses, including physical and mental abilities, overall health, loved ones, and eventually life.

Known as the “common cold of the elderly” because of its frequency, depression is currently the top emotional problem for older individuals. Suicide rates for white males over 70 are the highest of any age cohort. Experts believe that up to 50% of this population may be coping with depression.

The many losses and challenges of aging can cause someone to struggle with sadness or depression. Symptoms of depression often mirror the natural aging process, including changes in sleep, changes in appetite, slower motor activity and social isolation.

Tips for Interacting with People with Sadness or Depression

- Your volunteer role is not as a psychiatrist. Have faith in the person's inner capacities and show patience. Sometimes the best treatment for deep sadness is a listening ear that does not judge, preach, or pressure, but simply acknowledges and accepts.
- Do not simply avoid sad topics. Sadness, whether it is manifested in depression or not, is normal. Although it is painful, sadness itself is not life threatening.
- Do not attempt to artificially cheer someone up. If someone grieves the loss of a family member, friend, or even a pet, or complains about the more difficult symptoms of aging, acknowledge that as sad and a genuinely challenging experience. Within reason, share your own sadness. ("Yes, when I lost my cat, I felt sad about that, too. I can see why you feel so sad about losing your dog.")
- Help the client see the good things in relation to the source of sadness. ("Yes, it is sad that your partner isn't with you anymore. You must have really loved each other. What are some wonderful things you remember about your partner?")
- If someone seems to be truly mired in sadness, after accepting and listening, try to gently re-direct him or her to other topics or activities.
- Find things that give them joy and share those with them: music they enjoy, the artwork of a favorite artist on an Internet site, a funny or entertaining YouTube video, share a specific food, play a favorite game, look at pictures of grandchildren, read poetry aloud, etc.
- Depression is intensified by inactivity. Doing things together, especially physical activity, can help change the tone of conversations, and chemically intervene in someone's mental process. Walking, playing cards, going through albums, cleaning a shelf together, etc., can help someone struggling with too much sadness.
- Be caring and empathic without succumbing to the client's experience. Do not try to force happiness on them, but also do not sink into their sadness.
- If someone talks about suicide, do not overreact, or respond with great alarm. Use all of the same skills and resources described above. However, do contact the Volunteer Department immediately, so that our social workers can evaluate the situation and respond, if necessary.

Taking care of yourself so that you can help care for others

On occasion, it may feel challenging to maintain your own life balance, especially when a client that you have become close with experiences emotional or physical difficulties. Because we deal mainly with aging seniors, it is not uncommon to have clients that lose siblings or other loved ones or who experience their own personal decline in health or even pass away.

If at any point you are starting to feel overwhelmed, please contact the MOWSF Volunteer Department right away. It is OK to ask for and accept help, even if you just need an understanding person with whom you can discuss what you are experiencing.

In stressful times, it is sometimes easy to forget that you first have to care for yourself before you can care for others. While your volunteer role is not identical to that of a full-time caregiver, advice commonly provided to those professionals to help cope with stress include the following suggestions:

- Take care of your overall personal health – physical, emotional, and mental.
- Try to get exercise, regular rest or sleep, and maintain a normal eating routine.
- Try to avoid overwhelming yourself with too many activities.
- Try to eliminate stressors or negative influences wherever possible.
- Engage in positive hobbies or activities that you enjoy or spend time outdoors.
- Talk with family or friends about what you are experiencing; it is healthy to express your emotions and share your feelings.
- Try to maintain your optimism; know that you are helping make a difference for the people you care for; **focus on the things that you are doing to help.**
- Be caring and empathetic without succumbing to your client's intense experience; do not try to force happiness on him or her, but also do not sink into their sadness. They need to have the dignity of their own human experience.

The MOWSF Volunteer Department is here to support you however, we can. If at any point you're volunteer role is causing you stress, please let us know as soon as you can - we'll do whatever we can to help you work through it.

Safety and Emergency

Senior Mobility Safety Tips

Assisting people to stand, walk, transfer etc. requires specialized training and volunteers are asked not to help clients in this manner. However, on rare occasions, you may need to assist a client that has mobility issues. If you find yourself needing to assisting a client move the following are tips for offering proper assistance:

A cane: Offer your arm and let them grab onto it so that they are in control. If you take their arm, it may throw off their balance.

A walker: Clients should always stand up or sit down using the arms of a fixed chair, not the walker. You can place the walker in front of them once they are standing, or set it aside (not out of reach) once they're seated.

A wheelchair: Make sure the wheelchair is locked and steady, and that the chair they are moving to/from is steady. Help them to stand and pivot, and use their hands to steady themselves, but do not try to lift them when transferring out of the wheelchair.

In Case of Emergency

If a client does not answer the door for an appointment

1. Call the clients phone
2. If the client does not answer, call MOWSF main telephone number (415) 920-1111 to report the client to the safety board
3. Provide needed information to the MOWSF representative on the phone who will follow up until they determine the whereabouts of the client.
4. Please keep in mind our office hours: Mon-Friday 8:30am-5pm, Saturday 8:30am-1pm, Sundays closed – leave a message at the main number above we will return your call on Monday. However, in case of emergency, please call 911.

Call 911 if:

- The person is unconscious or has uncontrolled bleeding
- Has fallen and is unable to get up using their own abilities
- The person is uncharacteristically confused or irrational following a fall or other accident in which a concussion may have occurred
- The person has acute pain that might be associated with broken bones or internal bleeding.

****Stay with your client until s/he has been safely transferred into the hands of emergency professionals.***

****Report the incident to MOWSF main telephone number (415) 920-1111.*** It is ok to leave a voicemail with the details of the incident – all messages are confidential and will be picked up and returned.

Disaster Preparedness

Isolated and homebound seniors are some of the most vulnerable community members in a disaster. Often, these seniors typically cannot leave their home without assistance.

You can help if you first have a disaster plan in place and are prepared to provide for your own safety and that of your family. Once you and your family have a plan and the resources you need to safely weather a disaster, you can reach out to others who may need help.

Talk to your client about their preparation for dealing with a disaster. Ask if they have a plan and if they have family, friends, or neighbors that they can count on to help. Find out if they need help to outfit their home with basic disaster supplies needs (water, some stored food, first aid kit, etc.). Encourage them to get the help they might need to be ready.

Make an agreement with them about how will you communicate with each other. Decide if you will contact or visit your client as soon as possible if a disaster occurs.

For more details about planning for a disaster, check out the San Francisco website:

www.sf72.org

Reporting Suspected Elder Abuse

All MOWSF staff and volunteers are **required by law** to report suspected elder abuse or neglect to Adult Protective Services (APS). APS is the division of the Department of Aging and Adult Services that investigates reports of suspected elder abuse in the City of San Francisco. It is their mission to respond to all legitimate reports of abuse within a reasonable period of time and provide protection or relief to seniors through their contacts with the police department and social service agencies throughout the city.

Types of Abuse That Require a Mandated Report to APS:

- **Physical Abuse:** Any use of physical force that may result in injury, pain, or impairment. Includes acts like striking, pushing, shaking, burning, force feeding or physical restraint.
- **Sexual Abuse:** Any non-consensual sexual contact of any kind. Sexual abuse includes any unwanted touching, all types of sexual assault or battery, or any coerced nudity.
- **Neglect:** Refusing or failing to fulfill any part of a person's obligations to an elder. This includes the failure of a caregiver to provide necessary care, or to provide necessities such as food, clothing, or medicine. It also includes failure of a responsible party to pay for necessary care.
- **Self-Neglect:** Behavior, which threatens the elder's own health or safety such as failure to provide him/herself with adequate food, clothing, shelter, medication, thoughts of doing harm to him/herself, or not taking proper safety precautions.
- **Financial Abuse:** Improper use of an elder's money or assets. This includes cashing a person's checks without authorization, forging a person's signature, misusing a person's money or possessions, or coercing or deceiving a person into signing any document.
- **Abandonment:** The desertion of an elder by anyone having the care or custody of that person.
- **Abduction:** Taking an elder out of the state when the person does not have the capacity to consent to it.

- **Isolation:** Violation of personal rights, such as restraint or false imprisonment, preventing an elder from receiving phone calls, visitors, or mail.

Emotional or Psychological Abuse does not mandate a report. However, it is highly recommended to report any witnessed emotional abuse: verbal insults, threats, harassment, intimidation, and demeaning or humiliating comments.

How and When to Report:

- Report your suspicions to a member of the MOWSF Volunteer Department staff as soon as possible (415) 343-1298 **no later than the following workday (Monday if after a weekend visit).**
- A social workers is always in the MOWSF office between 8:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday.
- MOWSF staff may have additional information about a particular case, or knowledge of whether APS is already involved. If it is determined that a report needs to be made, a member of the social work staff will do it after discussion with the volunteer.

Emergency Contact Information

Meals on Wheels of San Francisco	(415) 920-1111
MOWSF Volunteer Department	(415) 343-1298
Director of Volunteers (Kathy Stirling)	(415) 713-5498
San Francisco Non-Emergency Police	(415) 553-0123
Adult Protective Services hotline	(415) 355-6700
San Francisco Housing Authority	(415) 715-3280

Resources for Senior Services

Often our clients need support from a wide array of services. MOWSF Social Worker's provide client referrals to needed services. When interacting with clients, if you observe a need that is not being met, please contact the Volunteer Department and we will work with the clients assigned Social Worker to get this need met. Listed below are resources if you would like to learn more about service that are offered in San Francisco for our senior community.

San Francisco Senior Citizens Resource Directory

Ageing and Disability Resource Centers (ADRCs) (415) 487-3370

Information on senior services in San Francisco and outstations located in neighborhoods throughout the city where seniors can go for one-on-one support.

Helplink Social Services 211 or (1-800-273-6222)

For general social service information, including senior services.

Government (Public) Services 311 or (415) 701-2311

For non-emergency City and County of San Francisco government matters.

Volunteer Roles

Volunteer Opportunity Summary

As volunteer, you could be in direct contact with a senior in their home. In order to protect our clients a standard procedure is to require a background check for any volunteer that has a client-facing role. Please note that after your application and interview process, you will receive a request from our partner Verified Volunteers, who will request the background, check. Below are the volunteer programs we offer:

Good Neighbor Program – *updated protocols due to COVID-19*

MOWSF's Good Neighbor program encompasses a wide range of volunteer activities, each with varying levels of social interaction with clients and levels of time commitment required. Under this program, we have the following volunteer opportunities:

Friendly Visitor: *this program is now a "virtual" program and renamed to Friendly Social Call – training is required*

In this role, you will be matched with a homebound San Francisco senior. You will make regular visits (and phone contacts) with your client to go for a walk, go on an outing, or just visit, play games, or converse socially in their home.

Shopping: *training is required and a NO CONTACT DELIVERY process is in place*

In this role, you will help a homebound client get items they by shopping for groceries from a near the client. Clients provide you with a shopping list and reimburse you when you deliver the items.

Client Needs: In this role, volunteers deliver items or perform small tasks as identified by the MOWSF social workers.

- **Delivery:** tasks may include delivering microwaves and mini refrigerators or miscellaneous items, such as bedding, medical equipment, etc.
- **Service:** tasks may include minor help around the home, (i.e. changing a lightbulb, or other such small task) or assisting clients with technology support
- **Dietary Supplements:** In this role, you will deliver dietary supplements such as Ensure, Glucerna, or Nepro – these supplements help clients experiencing health issues such as low body mass index or chronic illness.

Home Delivered Groceries - *this program is operating but this is an on call only position, we are currently not taking on any new volunteers*

In partnership with the SF-Marin Food Bank, this 100% volunteer run program, operates San Francisco's largest home-delivered grocery program. Each Wednesday morning, volunteers assemble and deliver more than 600 bags of groceries.

- **Assembly:** In this role, you will join the team of volunteers that assemble 600+ bags of groceries each week.
- **Delivery:** In this role, you will have the option to take on your own delivery route; or assist in the delivery with another driver to deliver groceries to homebound clients or adults with disabilities.

Special Occasion and Event Volunteers

Special Events – *on hold due to COVID-19*

Volunteer at our annual Gala, and other wine and food events throughout the year that help raise funds and awareness for MOWSF programs and services. This opportunity allows volunteers to combine the pleasures of good food and doing good to nourish the whole person.

Holidays – *on hold until Shelter in Place is fully lifted*

Help support seniors through one of our annual holiday programs! Join us as we give the Client Relationship Specialists a day off and deliver Thanksgiving meals to our clients. You can also wrap and/or deliver winter holiday gifts for all our clients –currently over 4000!

Handmade Greeting Cards – *at this time we are only accepting “Thinking of You” cards*

Get your creative juices flowing by creating handmade birthday and holiday cards and Thanksgiving Day placemats for the 4000 + seniors receiving Meals on Wheels.

Administrative & Internship Volunteers -*on hold due to COVID-19*

Volunteers help in the office with administrative functions, including data entry, filing, and special projects.

Corporate and Community Programs – *on hold due to COVID-19*

Our corporate programs are targeted towards employers in the downtown neighborhoods where over 1/3 of our seniors currently live. Many of our clients are low income in this neighborhood and benefit from the outside interaction of volunteers. The programs include:

Adopt a Building: In this role, a group of volunteers delivers meals to clients in a single building one to five days a week. Desk to desk in one hour, this is a fabulous way to get to know our senior community in downtown San Francisco.

Disaster Kits: MOWSF provide clients a kit with a 2-day supply of emergency food and water as well as emergency supplies. Groups big and small can help us reach our 4,000+ clients by spend a few hours delivering disaster kits from your offices downtown or another S.F. neighborhood location.

MOWSF Volunteer Policies

Time Commitment

Volunteers in the Friendly Visitor, Shopping, Meal Delivery, Adopt-A-Building and the Home Delivered Grocery program (delivery position only) are asked to commit to providing support in these roles for at least six months. We ask for this time commitment to honor the time that you and clients put into developing a relationship. Additionally, many of our clients are isolated and keeping a consistent and familiar face with our service is important in helping them feel comfortable and safe.

Friendly Visitors are asked to set aside at least two hours every other week for the client, not including transportation time. If the client requires less time, volunteers are not required to fulfill that time. Additional time together is often welcomed but not required. As volunteer-client schedules evolve, volunteers and clients must agree on time changes between them.

Volunteers must inform the Volunteer Department of any changes in the level of commitment and/or status.

No Compensation

Volunteers receive no wages or benefits from MOWSF and may not accept “tips” or other financial payment from clients. Volunteers must be cautious about accepting gifts: cards, homemade items, and cookies should be received graciously, but a gift of any potential value must be declined. This includes items that a client owns that they may want to get rid of, such as clothes, jewelry, and books. (For example, family members may feel a client was pressured or coerced to give away belongings in return for “volunteer” support). If there is any question about the appropriateness of a gift, first consult with the Volunteer Department before accepting a gift.

Staff Communication

MOWSF regularly checks with volunteers and clients to see how they are doing and to keep an estimated record of each volunteer’s hours. Volunteers should respond to these staff contacts promptly. If a volunteer does not maintain regular staff contact, we will assume that the volunteer has abandoned the volunteer role.

At Will Volunteer Termination

MOWSF is an “employment at will” organization, and like employees, volunteers may be asked to leave and terminate client contact at any time, at the will of MOWSF. Volunteers agree to abide by the volunteer policies and procedures explained in this handbook, professionally represent MOWSF, follow all MOWSF guidelines and directions for volunteers, and behave and perform their volunteer roles in a professional and ethical way and to the best of their ability. If there is a breach of any of these policies, procedures, guidelines, and/or expectations, the Volunteer Department staff will first coach the volunteer to resolve the issue. In serious situations, coaching may include a termination warning, and if the issue continues without resolution to MOWSF’s satisfaction, the volunteer role will be terminated by MOWSF.

Interacting with Clients

Client Confidentiality

Volunteers must maintain strict client confidentiality, except in the instances of elder abuse (see Reporting Suspected Elder Abuse section). Volunteers working directly with clients must sign a client confidentiality agreement as part of the application process. Never discuss the client's private life or share client contact info (name, address, phone, etc.) with anyone outside of MOWSF.

Specialized Advice or Work

Volunteers may not discuss financial matters with clients or perform any tasks that could be construed as financial assistance or advice. Volunteers may not provide medical advice, or any material or information that could be construed as medical advice, unless approved by the Nutrition or Social Work Departments at MOWSF.

For liability purposes, volunteers should not to perform home repairs or any other kind of specialized work without first checking in with the Volunteer Department.

Prohibited Purchases

Volunteers may not purchase tobacco products or alcoholic beverages for clients, even upon the client's request. Volunteers may pick up prescription medications if a client is unable to do so.

Additional Visitors / Pets

Do not bring friends, family, or pets on visits unless the senior has given advance permission. Some seniors, out of gratitude or shyness, may agree to more than they are comfortable with, so we ask volunteers to maintain respectful visiting practices. Clients often do enjoy occasional visits from a volunteer's partner and/or children; please clearly explain the visit and obtain the client's agreement in advance. We encourage volunteers to firmly establish their own relationship with the client before asking them if they would like to meet others.

Volunteer – Client Conflict

If a volunteer has a conflict with the client, MOWSF expects the volunteer to first attempt to resolve the conflict. If resolution attempts fail, call the Volunteer Department for assistance, so that issues can be addressed quickly. If problems continue, the Volunteer Department will look for a new match for the volunteer. Conflicts can be a natural part of relationships, and volunteers should never hesitate to report such conflicts or ask for help in dealing with them.

Volunteer Driving

The mission of our Volunteer Department is to alleviate senior isolation and increase client socialization. We do not provide volunteer driving services because such services are primarily focused on fulfilling non-relational needs for seniors, and increase liability.

Volunteers should never drive clients in their vehicles or the client's vehicle. Volunteers are allowed to take public transportation or ride share service with a client if the client is able to move independently without assistance. In addition, existing senior transport organizations in S.F. such as Paratransit are available as a transportation option. The client's social worker can provide further information.

Clients Ending Services with MOWSF

If a senior has ended their MOWSF meal services permanently, the volunteer and client together can choose one of the following:

1. End the relationship. Please note you always have the option to be matched with another existing MOWSF client.
2. Continue the relationship, but without further contact or involvement with MOWSF. Both parties must clearly understand that the relationship is now just a personal friendship and no longer involves or represents MOWSF in any way.

Because of MOWSF limited resources, we cannot continue ongoing support for clients no longer on our services as there are numerous existing clients needing our support.

Insurance and Liability Coverage

Health Insurance

Volunteers provide their own health insurance to receive care as needed. California State Worker's Compensation Law does not cover volunteers.

Volunteering for MOWSF can be a potentially dangerous activity. The dangers include, but are not limited to: back injury due to lifting, personal injury, property damage, or injury to others in an accident.

By voluntarily participating in these activities with the knowledge of the dangers involved, volunteers should be prepared to accept all risks or injury. Thus, volunteers' assignees, guardians and legal representatives will agree not to make a claim against, sue, or attach the property of Meals On Wheels of San Francisco for injury or damage resulting from voluntary participation.

Auto Insurance

Volunteers who own a car and will be driving to and from the volunteer commitment will need to provide proof of current auto insurance.

MOWSF provides no coverage for physical damage to volunteers' personal automobiles.

Parking Tickets

Any parking ticket incurred while volunteering is not covered by MOWSF.

Accident Reporting

If you are ever in an accident while volunteering, fill out an accident report within 24 hours and contact the Volunteer Department as soon as possible after the accident occurs

Thank you!

We hope this handbook helps to prepare you for your role as a MOWSF volunteer and serves as a reference if your volunteer role expands or changes over time.

Without the generosity of our volunteers, we would be unable to serve the San Francisco community of homebound seniors in the capacity that we currently do, or to meet the growing demand. As “our eyes and ears,” your efforts provide critical social contact and ensure the wellness of our seniors.

Thank you for being part of the growing community of support for homebound seniors, and continuing to help fulfill our mission of "nourishing the whole person."

- The MOWSF Volunteer Team