



Catholic Charities Boston Volunteer Handbook



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Welcome

Welcome to the volunteer community at Catholic Charities Boston (CCAB). We are deeply grateful for your decision to share your time and talents in service to our neighbors. Your presence strengthens our programs, expands our reach, and brings our mission to life in a tangible way. As a volunteer, you are an essential partner in our work, and your contributions help us respond to immediate needs while building pathways to stability and dignity.

Letter from Kelley Tuthill, Catholic Charities Boston President & CEO

I want to take a moment to express my deepest gratitude for your service to Catholic Charities Boston.

We are living in uncertain times—shifting federal policies, growing pressure on families, and increasing needs across our communities. When we face challenges this large, no single person or organization can meet the need alone. But together, we can and we do.

This year, you and your fellow volunteers have donated nearly 25,000 hours of service to Catholic Charities Boston, an extraordinary show of what is possible when a community comes together around a shared purpose. Whether you've helped in our food pantries, supported youth, taught English language skills to our immigrant neighbors, or served in an advisory role, each of you strengthens our mission and proves that we are far greater and more effective together than any of us could ever be alone.

We remain committed to serving our neighbors and building relationships that empower the most vulnerable toward more stable futures. From all of us at Catholic Charities Boston, thank you for being an essential part of this journey.

With sincere appreciation,
Kelley Tuthill, President & CEO

About Catholic Charities Boston

Catholic Charities Boston is a leading provider of comprehensive emergency assistance and long-term economic empowerment for families and individuals. Rooted in a faith mission, we welcome people regardless of faith and circumstance. We address key issues facing our communities, providing food, shelter, resources, affordable childcare, and advocacy while creating pathways to job and housing security. Our goal is to break the cycle of poverty by helping individuals and families overcome immediate crises and build sustainable futures.



Our Mission

We welcome and serve, with compassion and respect, all those in need by providing life's necessities, education, and advocacy to move families toward self-sufficiency.

Our Vision

To create a just, equitable, and compassionate society rooted in the dignity of all people.

Our History

Catholic Charities Boston began in 1903. After witnessing the appalling social conditions of Boston's immigrant and predominantly Catholic population, Archbishop John J. Williams of Boston envisioned an agency that would provide assistance and hope to families in need.

Today, Catholic Charities Boston is one of the most comprehensive social service non-profit organizations in Massachusetts, with over 70 programs across 20+ locations serving neighbors of all faiths and backgrounds that help move people from crisis to self-sufficiency.

Our Core Service Areas

Providing a Safety Net:

With economic challenges continuing to strain budgets and 1 in 3 households in Massachusetts facing food insecurity, Catholic Charities Boston works to reduce hunger and homelessness in our communities and stabilize single parents, families, and senior citizens experiencing financial hardship.

Strengthening Families:

Mental health services, trauma-informed support, and programs that foster independence empower young parents and families to overcome challenges, build resilience, and restore relationships.

Investing in our Youth:

Boston is the second most expensive city in the US for childcare, with tuition often exceeding the costs of mortgages. Affordable childcare and after-school programs provide enriching academic support while removing barriers that force families to choose between work and quality care, while specialized programs help youth to complete their high school education.

Empowering our Neighbors:

Mobilizing legal and community support, addressing language barriers, and creating pathways to job opportunities empowers individuals to pursue better lives while accelerating their path toward self-sufficiency.

Our Locations

Over 70 programs across 20+ locations in Eastern Massachusetts

With hubs in Dorchester, Lynn, Brockton, Lowell, and South Boston, and many other locations delivering our programs, Catholic Charities Boston is here to support children and families across the region.



Our Impact

Here are some important statistics about our impact in 2025:

- **2.9 million** pounds of food distributed through our food pantries
- **98.5%** of families who transitioned out of the Catholic Charities shelters successfully maintained permanent housing within the first year
- **1,935** families served across Youth & Family Services
- **1,329** students enrolled in adult education and workforce development programs, including English language classes and job training
- **97%** passing rate for Nursing Assistant/Home Health Aide Training program.

Learn more about our impact on our website: www.ccab.org/impact.

Volunteer Programs Team Staff

Name	Role	Email	Phone
Alicia Ridenour	Senior Director of Volunteer Programs	alicia_ridenour@ccab.org	617-464-8518
Holly Clark	Director of Volunteer Programs	holly_clark@ccab.org	781-380-4780
Lindsay Gavin	Volunteer Programs Coordinator	lindsay_gavin@ccab.org	617-464-8509

Role of Volunteers

Volunteers are essential partners in our mission. You extend our capacity, strengthen our community presence, and help ensure that individuals and families are welcomed with dignity, compassion, and respect. Many of our services would not be possible without the time, talent, and dedication that volunteers contribute each year.

Some volunteers work directly alongside participants—tutoring students, supporting English language learners, assisting in food pantries, delivering food to elders, or accompanying newly arrived families. Others offer behind-the-scenes support or provide the first warm greeting someone encounters when they walk through our doors. Our volunteer community also includes many student interns, who contribute meaningful service while gaining valuable hands-on experience through their academic programs.

<https://www.ccab.org/ways-to-give/volunteer/>



Every role, whether highly visible or quiet and logistical, plays an important part in creating a supportive and responsive environment.

Each year, volunteers contribute thousands of hours of service, representing the equivalent of multiple full-time staff members and extending our ability to respond to growing needs. Staff provide programmatic expertise and guidance, and volunteers enhance this work by bringing additional energy, perspective, and connection to the community. With limited resources and growing community needs, volunteer service significantly expands our impact.

We are deeply grateful for our volunteers and the lasting difference you make through your generosity and service.

Volunteer Onboarding and Orientation

NOTE: The following onboarding steps take place once you have been matched with a program and a volunteer role.

Onboarding Process for All Roles EXCEPT in Child Care

Individual Volunteer Required Onboarding

Defined as volunteers who are not part of a special event or a one-time group opportunity.

- **Register on our volunteer portal (Get Connected):** For step-by-step instructions, please see the FAQ section of Get Connected: <https://volunteer.ccab.org/faqs/>
 - Create a volunteer account at <https://volunteer.ccab.org/>
 - Select the **Individual track**.
 - Respond to your specific volunteer opportunity(ies).
 - If the volunteer opportunity is shift-based, you can sign up for shifts all at once or as you go, as long as you sign up for shifts at least 24 hours BEFORE attending.
- **Complete a CORI:**
 - You'll complete a short CORI authorization form (we have both electronic and hard copy versions) and present a valid government-issued photo ID to your Catholic Charities program supervisor or another designated staff person, who will verify your identity in person. Your information will be used only for the purpose of conducting the required background check and will be handled confidentially in accordance with Massachusetts law and Catholic Charities Boston policies. This can happen at your first shift, but you will need to be fully supervised that first shift until your CORI clears.
 - Any volunteer who has experienced a break in service of more than 60 days may need to be re-CORId.

Event/Group Volunteer Required Onboarding

<https://www.ccab.org/ways-to-give/volunteer/>

Defined as volunteers participating in a one-time volunteer opportunity for a CCAB event or as a part of a group (including school and parish groups).

- **All Adults: Register on our volunteer portal (Get Connected):** For step-by-step instructions, please see the FAQ section of Get Connected:
<https://volunteer.ccab.org/faqs/>
 - Create a volunteer account at <https://volunteer.ccab.org/>
 - Adults should select the **Event/Group Volunteer (Adult) track**.
 - Respond to your specific volunteer opportunity.
- **If the group contains minors, minors should either:**
 - Option One:
 - Create a volunteer account at <https://tinyurl.com/eventorgroupminor>
 - Respond to the specific volunteer opportunity.
 - Option Two:
- The adult point person for the group can send the CCAB the names and email address of all minors in the group so that we can register each person. **If the group contains minors, the adult point person in the group should:**
 - Complete the Waiver Form for Groups with Minor Volunteers
 - This will be sent directly via email and can be signed electronically

Onboarding Process in Child Care

Youth-facing volunteers in our childcare programs are legally required to complete the background check process through the Department of Early Education and Care (EEC-BRC), which includes:

- a Massachusetts Criminal Offender Record Information (CORI) check through the Department of Criminal Justice Information Services (DCJIS);
- a Department of Children and Families (DCF) check for supported findings of abuse or neglect;
- a Sex Offender Registry Information (SORI) check through the Massachusetts Sex Offender Registry Board (SORB);
- a fingerprint-based check of state and national criminal history databases; and, when applicable,
- a search of the National Sex Offender Registry (NSOR) database or out of state records for any known criminal history, child welfare, and sex offender information where applicants have lived in the past five years.

Please note that fingerprinting typically costs \$30-\$35, and the volunteer is responsible for this cost.

In addition, the Early Childhood Education department requires volunteers and interns who spend extended time in childcare centers to provide documentation of a recent physical examination. Volunteers should submit a copy of a physical completed within the

past two years. If you have not had a recent physical, documentation of a scheduled appointment may be accepted. Volunteers must also provide proof of MMR vaccination or an approved exemption.

Orientation

All volunteers should be oriented to their program and role by their supervisor.

Supporting Our Community: What to Expect & How to Show Up

What to Expect

Volunteers support individuals and families at many different points in their lives. While every person's experience is unique, below are common dynamics you may notice. Please do not hesitate to bring in your site supervisor if you have any questions, concerns, or are unsure how to handle a situation; they are the expert and ultimately responsible for anything that happens on site.

A Dynamic Environment

Programs may be busy, and priorities can shift quickly.

Varied Communication Styles

People may communicate differently based on personality, culture, language, or stress.

Complex Systems and Processes

Services and processes may be unfamiliar or confusing for those accessing them.

Strong Emotions

At times, individuals may express frustration, stress, or urgency.

Clear Roles and Boundaries

Consistency and fairness depend on volunteers working within defined roles.

Focus on Dignity and Respect

Every interaction—no matter how brief—matters.

How We Show Up: A Trauma-Informed Approach

Many of the people we serve—as well as our staff and volunteers—have experienced or are currently experiencing trauma. This can include experiences such as “homelessness and transience, unemployment, disaster, war, poverty, substance use [disorder], domestic

violence, and abuse and neglect. Traumatic exposure cuts across age groups, gender identity, socioeconomic status, race, ethnicity, geography, and sexual orientation.”* These experiences may shape how individuals engage with services, communicate, or respond in stressful situations.

Being a trauma-informed organization means recognizing that we may not know someone’s full story—and that we do not need to. Instead, we focus on creating an environment that prioritizes safety, trust, respect, and choice in every interaction.

The following principles guide how we show up in our roles:

6 GUIDING PRINCIPLES TO A TRAUMA-INFORMED APPROACH

The CDC’s [Center for Preparedness and Response \(CPR\)](#), in collaboration with SAMHSA’s [National Center for Trauma-Informed Care \(NCTIC\)](#), developed and led a new training for CPR employees about the role of trauma-informed care during public health emergencies. The training aimed to increase responder awareness of the impact that trauma can have in the communities where they work.

Participants learned SAMHSA’S six principles that guide a trauma-informed approach, including:



Adopting a trauma-informed approach is not accomplished through any single particular technique or checklist. It requires constant attention, caring awareness, sensitivity, and possibly a cultural change at an organizational level. On-going internal organizational assessment and quality improvement, as well as engagement with community stakeholders, will help to imbed this approach which can be augmented with organizational development and practice improvement. The training provided by CPR and NCTIC was the first step for CDC to view emergency preparedness and response through a trauma-informed lens.

*<https://www.tfec.org/resources-for-a-trauma-informed-community/>

How to Put the Principles into Action:

Small, consistent actions can help create an environment that feels safe, respectful, and supportive.

Safety: Create an environment where people feel physically and emotionally safe.

- **What this looks like in practice:**
 - Greet people warmly and introduce yourself
 - Explain what will happen next (e.g., “We’ll get you checked in, then you can head over here...”)
 - Be mindful of tone, body language, and personal space—volunteers should ask permission before any physical contact (even a pat on the shoulder or a hug) and accept “no” graciously, as well as maintain a comfortable distance to avoid crowding someone’s personal bubble

<https://www.ccab.org/ways-to-give/volunteer/>

- Avoid sudden movements or overly personal questions
- Alert staff if you notice someone who seems distressed or uncomfortable

Trustworthiness & Transparency: Build trust through clear, honest, and consistent communication.

- **What this looks like in practice:**

- Be clear about your role as a volunteer and what you can/cannot do
- Follow through on commitments (or communicate if plans change)
- Share accurate information and defer to staff when unsure
- Avoid making promises you cannot keep
- Respect confidentiality at all times

Peer Support: Foster connection and a sense of community.

- **What this looks like in practice:**

- Treat each person with kindness and respect, regardless of their situation
- Offer encouragement and a welcoming presence
- Help create a friendly, non-judgmental atmosphere
- Support fellow volunteers and step in when help is needed
- Recognize that simply being present and attentive can be meaningful

Collaboration & Mutuality: Value shared roles and work together respectfully.

- **What this looks like in practice:**

- Work as part of a team with staff and other volunteers
- Follow staff guidance while offering help where appropriate
- Listen actively and be open to feedback
- Recognize that clients are experts in their own experiences
- Avoid taking over situations—partner with staff and clients instead

Empowerment, Voice & Choice: Support individuals in having agency and being heard.

- **What this looks like in practice:**

- Offer choices when possible
- Listen without interrupting or rushing
- Respect decisions, even if they differ from what you might choose
- Encourage independence rather than doing everything for someone
- Use strength-based language (e.g., “You’ve done a lot to get here today”)

Cultural, Historical & Gender Awareness: Approach all interactions with respect for diverse identities and experiences.

- **What this looks like in practice:**

- Use inclusive, respectful language
- We encourage volunteers to assist clients in their preferred language whenever possible, if they have the capacity to do so or are able to direct the client to another staff member or volunteer with those language capabilities

- Avoid assumptions about background, identity, or needs
- Be mindful of cultural differences in communication and behavior
- Be open to learning and adjusting your approach
- Seek staff guidance when unsure how to navigate a situation respectfully

Note: You are not expected to be an expert in trauma-informed care. Your role is to **show up with respect, consistency, and a willingness to learn**. When in doubt, pause, ask questions, and seek support from staff.

Volunteer Expectations, Policies, and Procedures

Catholic Charities Boston's Commitment to Volunteers

We value the contributions of our volunteers and strive to provide a supportive and meaningful experience. Volunteers can expect that we will:

- **Provide clear onboarding, training, expectations, and communication** so volunteers' time is respected and volunteers can serve effectively.
- **Offer appropriate supervision, guidance, and support**, from the programs directly as well as from the Volunteer department.
- **Provide a safe, respectful, and inclusive environment** for volunteers and program participants alike.
- **Provide opportunities for learning, engagement, feedback, and growth** whenever possible.
- **Recognize and appreciate volunteers' service** and the important role they play in our work.

Volunteer Expectations

As representatives of our organization and partners in our mission, volunteers are expected to:

- **Act with respect and dignity toward all people**, including program participants, fellow volunteers, and staff. You are representatives of our organization, and we expect you to champion our mission positively.
- **Respect organizational policies and procedures and maintain confidentiality**, especially those related to safety, boundaries, appropriate conduct, and personal information about clients, families, and fellow volunteers.
- **Follow program guidelines and staff direction**, recognizing that staff are responsible for program oversight and all decision-making.
- **Be reliable and communicate clearly**, including arriving on time, completing agreed-upon tasks, notifying staff if schedules change, etc.
- **Participate in required onboarding** to ensure they are adequately screened and prepared for their roles.



- **Engage with the Get Connected volunteer portal**, including signing up for volunteer opportunities, tracking hours, etc.
- **Use good judgment and ask questions when unsure** about how to handle a situation or if you are able to execute what's asked of you.

Volunteer Procedures

Tracking Volunteer Hours

- Volunteers are asked to record the hours they serve so that we can understand the scope of the work done at CCAB and the impact you make on our programs, as well as so we can properly appreciate your efforts. For step-by-step instructions, please see the FAQ section of Get Connected: <https://volunteer.ccab.org/faqs/>
- Volunteers are required to check-in and out on the Get Connected tablet every time they serve onsite at a Catholic Charities Boston location.
- If you are volunteering offsite, you are required to log your volunteer hours on your Get Connected account.

Please note, if you require hours documentation for community service or any other purpose, you must inform your program supervisor up front. Additionally, only the CCAB staff person who has supervised this volunteer is authorized to verify service hours and sign off. This data must be taken from Get Connected.

Sharing Feedback and Appreciation

Volunteers are invited to share feedback directly with program staff about their volunteer experiences. Additionally, there's an [evergreen survey](#) in the quarterly volunteer newsletter, where volunteers can share feedback directly with the Volunteer Programs Team. Volunteers are also invited to reach out via email or phone to share feedback with the Volunteer Programs team at any time.

CCAB recognizes the importance of its volunteers and tries to formally and informally recognize volunteers throughout their time with the organization. We typically hold an annual appreciation event for individual volunteers in the fall, and we celebrate Volunteer Appreciation Week the last week in April.

Departure and Dismissal

The relationship between a volunteer and Catholic Charities Boston may end at any time at the will of either party. Volunteers must notify their site supervisor upon completion of their volunteer commitment. CCAB will terminate a volunteer if the individual has demonstrated an unwillingness or inability to abide by the policies expressed in this document. Depending on the circumstances and the severity of the situation, termination may include previous verbal or written communication between the volunteer and CCAB to document the issue at hand.

Media Inquiries

<https://www.ccab.org/ways-to-give/volunteer/>



Volunteer interaction with media should be facilitated by your Catholic Charities Boston program manager. If you are contacted by the media to speak on behalf of Catholic Charities, you must respond that you are not in a position to comment. You should then refer the person making the inquiry to the Catholic Charities Boston staff person supervising your volunteering; that person will coordinate with our Marketing and Communications Department.

Conflict Resolution

If a concern or conflict arises, volunteers are encouraged to address it promptly and respectfully. If additional support is needed, volunteers should reach out to their staff supervisor at the program level. The staff supervisor will inform the Volunteer Programs Team and escalate to them if needed.

Volunteer Policies

Age Requirements

Our individual volunteer opportunities typically have a minimum age of 14, though some programs require volunteers to be 18+. Children and youth may volunteer in certain programs when accompanied by a caregiver or within the context of a group. Please consult the Volunteer Programs Team for specific age requirements. Adults who are coming to volunteer may not bring their young children with them unless they've been cleared to participate in the volunteer activity; they cannot be left in the waiting room.

Boundaries with Program Participants

Maintaining appropriate boundaries is essential to protecting both volunteers and those we serve. Volunteers shall not:

- Share personal contact information with clients unless explicitly authorized by their program supervisor
- Provide or accept money, gifts, or personal favors
- Engage in relationships outside the scope of their volunteer role

These expectations reflect widely adopted nonprofit practices to ensure ethical relationships and prevent conflicts of interest or harm.

Client Volunteers

Individuals receiving services may also volunteer within the programs they participate in. In these cases, they are expected to follow the same guidelines and responsibilities as all volunteers, while also adhering to the policies that apply to program participants. Volunteering does not affect their eligibility for services, priority status, or access to additional benefits.

Dress Code

Volunteers should wear clean, comfortable clothing. It should not be tattered, revealing, or display language or graphics that are vulgar, explicit, or that may otherwise be offensive.



Clothing should allow volunteers to work safely and respectfully within the environment they are serving.

Some volunteer opportunities have specific attire requirements. For example, for any physical tasks, including all roles at Food Pantries; clean-up, gardening, and organizing across sites; and food loading/unloading across programs, closed-toe shoes are required and clothing that may pose a safety hazard (such as excessively loose or dangling items) should be avoided.

Certain programs may provide additional guidance regarding attire based on the nature of the work. Volunteers will be notified of these requirements ahead of time. If you have specific questions, please contact your program supervisor before your volunteer shift.

Remaining in Assigned Areas

Volunteers should remain in their assigned work area unless directed otherwise by a staff member. Many Catholic Charities Boston locations provide confidential services or have areas that are restricted to staff, program participants, or authorized personnel.

Drug Free Workplace Policy

The sale, manufacture, distribution, purchase, use or possession of equipment and material which are used, intended for use, or designed for use with non-prescribed controlled substances is prohibited on agency property or while conducting agency business.

Working, volunteering, or interning while impaired by alcohol, intoxicants, non-prescribed narcotics, hallucinogenic drugs, marijuana, or controlled substances is prohibited while on agency property, or while conducting agency business outside of the workplace.

An employee, volunteer, or intern taking either prescribed or over-the-counter medication that may impair their attention or performance, or that makes the individual sleepy, should inform their manager upon arrival to work. Employees, volunteers, and interns may not work while under the influence of prescription or over the counter medication, which impairs their ability to perform job functions safely.

For purposes of this policy, “under the influence” is a management determination, based on the judgment and/or observation, that an individual’s demonstrated behavior or condition is affected by drugs or alcohol and is a threat to the individual, collective safety, or productivity. This judgment generally should be substantiated by information, such as:

- Observation of drug or alcohol use and/or the behavior and manifestation of being under the influence of a drug or alcohol

- Reasonable suspicion that an impairment of physical or mental ability, absenteeism, tardiness, or deterioration in performance is related to drug or alcohol use; or
- Knowledge or evidence that an individual is involved in the use, possession, sale, solicitation, or transfer of drugs or alcohol while working or while on Catholic Charities premises or operating Catholic Charities vehicles, machinery or equipment.

Violations of this policy will result in disciplinary action up to and including termination of employment/volunteering/internship. In lieu of termination, other disciplinary action may apply in the judgment of Catholic Charities, such as, but not limited to, suspension.

Harassment Policy

It is the objective of The Catholic Charitable Bureau of The Archdiocese of Boston, Inc. (Catholic Charities) to promote a workplace that is free of harassment. Harassment in the workplace and other settings in which volunteers and interns find themselves in connection with their volunteering/internship is unlawful and will not be tolerated. Catholic Charities has adopted this policy which applies to employees, volunteers and interns.

Catholic Charities is proud of its policy of maintaining a work environment that encourages respect for the dignity of everyone. Catholic Charities endeavors to maintain a work environment free from unlawful harassment based on gender, sexual orientation, race, color, religious creed, national origin, ancestry, age or handicap (disability), genetics, active military or veteran status and participation in discrimination complaint related activities. Catholic Charities prohibits such harassment, whether at the office or program site, during outside work assignments or at agency sponsored social or nonsocial functions, events or programs. Should such harassment occur, Catholic Charities will take appropriate corrective action to prevent its continuation or recurrence of behavior. Catholic Charities will endeavor to prevent the harassment of its employees, volunteers, and interns by persons who are not agency employees, but who are on agency premises or who have a business or other relationship with the agency.

Harassment is unlawful, and any individual found to have engaged in harassment will be subject to disciplinary action, which may include termination of employment/volunteering/internship or other professional assignment.

Catholic Charities will not permit retaliation of any kind against anyone who complains about harassment or participates in good faith in an investigation of a harassment complaint. Such retaliation is unlawful, and any individual found to have engaged in retaliation would be subject to disciplinary action, which may include termination of employment/volunteering/internship or other professional assignment.



An employee, intern or volunteer who believes they may have been harassed in a manner prohibited by this policy is urged to utilize this procedure as soon as possible after a perceived act of harassment occurs. Prompt reporting allows Catholic Charities to investigate while the facts are still fresh and to take prompt corrective action, when appropriate. The determination of the legality of a particular action will be made from the facts, on a case-by-case basis, and Catholic Charities will handle the matter with as much confidentiality as possible under the circumstances and with due regard to the rights and wishes of all parties, recognizing that there are many circumstances where complete confidentiality is not possible. Upon receipt of a complaint, Catholic Charities will promptly undertake an investigation and when appropriate, corrective action.