

# **Meal Volunteer Handbook**

**First Light, Inc.**

**2230 Fourth Avenue North**

**Birmingham, AL 35203**

**205-323-4277**

**[www.firstlightshelter.org](http://www.firstlightshelter.org)**

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**FIRST LIGHT**



A CENTER FOR HOMELESS WOMEN AND CHILDREN

## First Light Volunteer Handbook

### General Volunteer Guidelines

1. Here at First Light, we strive to provide a safe environment for our guests and volunteers. A staff member should be notified immediately if an unsafe situation is noticed, a medical emergency arises, or if a guest is expressing the desire to hurt themselves or someone else.
2. We ask that volunteers respect the privacy and confidentiality of all First Light guests at all times. Names and identifying information about guests should never be shared with anyone other than First Light staff. This is extremely important. Due to our confidentiality policy, we ask that you **do not** take pictures of the guests. You are more than welcome to take pictures of you and your group serving. Feel free to e-mail them to the Volunteer Coordinator to be shared on our social media platforms.
3. Men and children are welcome to volunteer at First Light. Children should be accompanied by a responsible adult. We ask that you closely supervise all children in the kitchen. The kitchen contains a lot of equipment that can be very dangerous. Please **do not allow** children to play in the walk-in cooler, climb or crawl on counters, or stand in chairs. We ask that everyone handling food wears serving gloves that are provided in the kitchen.
3. You are more than welcome to socialize with the guests while serving. We only ask that you not give advice, counsel the guests, disclose information about other guests or become personally involved with any of the guests. We ask that you not give out money or items such as clothing, shoes, toiletries, etc. guests. If a guest expresses a need for such items and you wish to assist her with those needs, you may contact her social worker and get approval to do so, indirectly. Otherwise, donations should be made to First Light for staff to distribute as needed.
4. Volunteers who anticipate arriving late or being unable to report for their scheduled volunteer service should notify the volunteer coordinator or another on-duty staff person as soon as possible so that appropriate arrangements can be made. **(If after business hours or on weekends call the shelter!)**
5. Expenses incurred during volunteer service are largely unreimbursed by the agency. Please consult the IRS code or your tax professional with questions about the deductibility of in-kind donations and expenses incurred while volunteering. In-kind donation forms are always available at the front desk.
6. Former First Light guests may volunteer at First Light after having been gone from First Light for at least one year AND with the permission of the Director of Social Services. Previous First Light guests who wish to volunteer must disclose their previous stay at First Light to the Volunteer Coordinator before scheduling volunteer service so that appropriate training can be given.
7. At any time during the screening, placement, orientation, training or volunteering process either the volunteer or the agency can end the relationship. Reasonable notice should be given upon the ending of the relationship.
8. We are committed to providing the most meaningful, fulfilling, and pleasant volunteer experiences possible. In order to do this, we need your help! We need for you to tell us what went well, what didn't go well, what you were not prepared for, what happened that you didn't expect, what was incredible and what you think needs to change!
9. Staff will keep track of your information and volunteer hours in a secure, online database called Cool Focus. We never share or sell your information and respect your privacy. Please record your volunteer hours in the provided volunteer sign-in binder (located in the kitchen next to the ice machine). Name, time in, time out and signature are required for First Light to receive a match for your volunteer hours.

## Meal Volunteer Guide

We understand that you might not regularly prepare and serve a meal for 45 plus people, and might need guidance. Below is some information that you might find useful, but always feel free to ask questions.

1. For breakfast and dinner please prepare enough food to feed approximately 45 women. For lunch, please prepare for 30. For the most accurate headcount, please call the front desk at 205-323-4277 a few days before you are scheduled to serve. You are more than welcome to cook in First Light's large kitchen, prepare the food before arriving, or cater food from a restaurant. We have a conventional oven, a convection oven which cooks at a faster rate than a normal oven (located to the right of the pizza oven), a gas stovetop, a pizza oven and a small griddle. We also have large skillets and pots, large cookie sheets, serving utensils, basic spices, and plastic wrap and foil for leftovers. **Bringing extra appliances to be used in the kitchen trips the breakers- this results in none of the appliances working!**

2. It only takes about 2-5 volunteers to prepare and serve breakfast and dinner at First Light and 1-3 for lunch, depending on the menu. Due to space restrictions, we ask that you not have more than 15 people in the kitchen at a time.

3. **Breakfast** is served at **7:30AM**. **Lunch** is served at **11:30AM**. **Dinner** is served at **6:30PM**.

Please call 323-4277 and tell a First Light employee if you are going to be late, cannot come, or will not be staying to serve.

\*note: **The routine we keep at First Light is extremely important. We understand last-minute emergencies, but if it is at all possible, please arrive and serve promptly.**

**5. What is provided and what should I bring with me?** Paper goods are provided by First Light, although it is extremely helpful to our budget when groups are able to bring enough paper goods for the meal they are serving! Milo's Tea Company has partnered with First Light and will be providing Milo's tea for our meals the entire 2023! This tea is located in our cooler on the bottom left shelf. If you wish, you are welcome to bring beverages or you can use powdered drink mixes (Koo-Aid, sweet tea, lemonade) that we provide. The mixes are located right next to the pitchers. For breakfast, we ask that you bring any fruit juices (orange, apple, grape). Coffee and fixings will already be prepared for the guests in the day room. We often have basic condiments, but not always. If you would rather use what we have, you may call a day in advance to find out if we have the condiment you will need for the meal.

8. Please notify the front desk staff when you are ready to serve. They will then begin calling for the guests to line up according to bed number. We ask that you serve the meal by placing the food on the plates. Before serving seconds to anyone, please verify with a staff person that all ladies have been called for firsts. Using the phone on the sign-in table, pick up and dial 123 to speak to a staff member.

10. Leftovers that you wish to leave at First Light may be covered tightly, labeled with the date and placed in the walk-in cooler.

12. If you could leave the kitchen like you found it (which is hopefully clean), we would be forever grateful! Doing the following is appreciated: placing leftovers you wish to leave in the cooler, wiping down the counters, washing and putting away utensils/pots/pans that were used, and sweeping or wiping up spills on the floor.  
THANK YOU!

**THANK YOU SO MUCH FOR YOUR TIME AND EFFORT! If you have any questions or concerns, please contact the Volunteer Coordinator at 323-4277 or by email at [volunteer@firstlightshelter.org](mailto:volunteer@firstlightshelter.org).**