Welcome to Women’s Empowerment

Dear Volunteer,

Welcome to Women’s Empowerment! We are delighted that you have chosen to volunteer your time with us. We understand that your time is precious and we are honored that you are willing to spend some of it with us. Each and every day our agency depends on volunteers like you to ensure that we operate efficiently and successfully. Volunteers at Women’s Empowerment do everything from teach our classes and mentor program participants to plan our events and sort through donations. In short, Women’s Empowerment could not operate without dedicated volunteers like you.

The Volunteer Handbook provides answers to many of the questions you may have about the volunteer programs we offer. It covers policies and procedures, and our mutual responsibilities. You are responsible for reading and understanding the Volunteer Handbook, and for adhering to Women’s Empowerment policies and procedures. If anything is unclear, please discuss the matter with the Volunteer Coordinator.

Again, on behalf of our staff and everyone here at Women’s Empowerment, we welcome you to our volunteer program. Thank you for taking time to help us end the cycle of homelessness, one woman at a time.

Sincerely,

Lisa Culp
Executive Director

Michelle Adcock
Volunteer Manager
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Purpose of This Handbook

This handbook has been produced to help you become a better Women’s Empowerment volunteer. This book will share with you a little of our history, philosophy, practices, and policies as well as all the benefits we will provide to you as a valued volunteer.

No volunteer handbook can answer all the questions you might have about our program. It is in our volunteer orientation that we can better get to know each other, express our views, and volunteer together in a harmonious relationship.

We hope this Handbook will allow you to feel comfortable with us. We depend on you – your success is our success. Please don’t hesitate to ask questions. Your volunteer coordinator will gladly answer them. We believe you will enjoy your volunteer work and your fellow volunteers here. We also believe you will find Women’s Empowerment a great place to volunteer.

We ask that you read this Handbook carefully, and refer to it whenever questions arise. We also suggest that you take it home so your family can become familiar with Women’s Empowerment and our policies.
Mission, Vision & History

Mission Statement

The mission of Women's Empowerment is to educate and empower women who are homeless with the skills and confidence necessary to get a job, maintain a healthy lifestyle, and regain a home for themselves and their children.

History

This mission was created by homeless women expressing their needs and lived out by way of a community coming together around the desire to end homelessness—for good.

Our executive director and founder, Lisa Culp, was working at Sacramento Loaves & Fishes when the idea formed. Lisa watched homeless mothers raising their children on the streets. She watched those children grow up, still homeless, to become mothers of new babies born into homelessness. She knew there must be a solution to this cycle of poverty.

Working with focus groups at Loaves & Fishes, Lisa listened to women share their stories and their needs. In 2001, she worked with community leaders to create Women’s Empowerment, which immediately proved to be a successful solution to help end the cycle of poverty.

In 2004, Women’s Empowerment became an independent 501(c)(3) nonprofit. Since then, the team has grown to include a board and staff with deep knowledge of the homeless community’s needs, and dozens of volunteer teachers and mentors—all of whom donate countless hours of their time to ensuring that homeless women successfully rise out of poverty.

Since its inception, Women’s Empowerment has served hundreds of women and their children (all of whom we know by name). In May 2009, Women’s Empowerment was named Nonprofit of the Year by the Nonprofit Resource Center. This is one of the highest honors a nonprofit can receive in the Sacramento region.
Volunteer Expectations

What You Can Expect from Women’s Empowerment

☐ Respectfulness of your commitment, time & confidentiality
☐ To be part of a team
☐ Ongoing support from everyone on the WE Staff
☐ An inclusive, welcoming culture
☐ To be recognized and appreciated for your work
☐ The right to say no to projects and tasks that make you uncomfortable

Women’s Empowerment is an inclusive, supportive organization where volunteers can expect to be treated with respect. We respect your valuable time and commitment to our program, as well as your right to confidentiality as a volunteer.

What Women’s Empowerment Expects From You

☐ Honor your commitment to our program
☐ Cooperate with the WE staff and fellow volunteers
☐ Be prompt and reliable
☐ Notify us of any changes to your commitment as a volunteer
☐ Keep all communications with or concerning the women in our program confidential
☐ Maintain a respectful relationship with clients

Our expectations are more clearly outlined in the Policies & Procedures section of this guide on page 8.
Volunteering with Women’s Empowerment

The Orientation Process

1. Attend Volunteer Orientation
2. Complete Volunteer Application Form
3. Complete Volunteer Agreement Form
4. Send in TB Test Results
5. Send in Livescan Results (Childcare Only)
6. Submit copy of valid drivers license and proof of auto insurance (Drivers only)
7. Start volunteering!
Volunteering with Women’s Empowerment

Positions

There are a variety of opportunities to volunteer your time and skills at Women’s Empowerment. Over 90% of our programs are taught by volunteers. Volunteers teach our classes, mentor program participants, and help with day-to-day operations. If you have a question about who you should be reporting to, contact Michelle and she will direct you to the appropriate staff.

Career Mentor

Volunteer career mentors support a woman individually as she prepares her resume and begins her school or job search. The student-mentor relationship is meant to model a professional relationship. Mentors are required to meet at least four times with their student during our 8-week program. During these meetings, mentors assist the women with their graduation requirements.

Mentors are the representatives of our community that make sure a woman knows that she is worth somebody’s time and effort – that she matters to this community. As a professional woman, the mentor helps a student hone her resume and interviewing skills. As a fellow woman, the mentor bolsters a student’s confidence and courage as she bravely ventures into the scary world of job applications, interviews, and initial rejection. As a working woman, the mentor is a bridge that links a homeless woman back into the workforce. As a fellow citizen, the mentor offers a helping hand so a woman can now fish for herself.

New mentors go through a new mentor orientation before beginning the mentoring relationship. Trainings are held in January, April, July, & October and last approximately 1.5 hours. They take place at the Women’s Empowerment office.

Childcare

Our childcare center at Women’s Empowerment cares for all of our program participants’ children under the age of 5. We provide healthy meals and educational games to help reach developmental milestones and ease the stress of homelessness. Volunteers are needed to assist with cradling infants, playing with toddlers and general assistance in the room. Mom can then be free to focus on her education and career goals, knowing her kids are in a safe and loving environment. Volunteers are needed Monday through Friday from 8:45 am to 2:30 pm. and are required to go through LiveScan fingerprinting.
Clothing Closet

Women’s Empowerment receives tremendous support from the community through donations for clothing, supplies, and food. These supplies help keep our operating costs low, and provide women with essential items they need.

We need volunteers to help sort and hang donated items, greet shoppers and help Women’s Empowerment students and graduates shop for items they need. Volunteers should have a positive attitude and be able to work well with Clothing Closet volunteers. The center is open Monday through Friday from 11:00 am to 3:00 pm. Volunteers hours will vary depending on your schedule. The Clothing Closet is located at the Women’s Empowerment Office.

Drivers

As many of the women in our program do not have their own car, Women’s Empowerment relies upon volunteer drivers to take the women to and from field trip destinations. These include places like the Assistance League Thrift Store and various other appointments. Volunteers are required to present proof of a valid driver’s license and insurance. Dates and times may vary.

Mock Interviews

Part of getting our women job-ready is giving them practice by doing Mock Interviews. Volunteers will “mock” interview our students and will evaluate their interviewing skills. These “interviews” help the women put what they’ve learned in classes and mentoring sessions to work. The women come dressed in their business formal outfits and bring copies of their new resumes, ready to impress.

Ideally, our Mock Interview volunteers are HR or business professionals who have experience with the interviewing process. Mock Interviewers are asked to give feedback afterwards in a group setting in order to help maintain a professional environment and avoid discussion of the women’s personal lives. Interviews take place on a weekday from 8:45 am to 12:15 pm. We have four Mock Interviews per year with varying dates. The interviews take place at the Women’s Empowerment office.
Resume Writing Workshop

Resume writing is a vital component to any job search. All women in our program must turn in a completed resume in order to graduate from Women’s Empowerment. For many of them, this is the first time they’ve worked on a resume in many, many years. Some may be just starting their resume, and others will just need help touching theirs up.

Workshops take place on a weekday from 9:00 am to 12:00 noon. We have four Resume workshops a year with varying dates. The workshops take place at the Women’s Empowerment office.

Special Events

We hold a variety of special events throughout the year. These include fundraisers, picnics, graduations, our Holiday Craft Party, appreciation dinners and our annual Gala. Volunteer opportunities include serving on planning committees, helping with day of event tasks and more. Dates and times vary.
Volunteer Policies & Procedures

As a new volunteer, it will take time to adjust to your new surroundings and the way things operate here at Women’s Empowerment. This Handbook is designed to help you adjust to your new role here and answer questions about the policies, procedures and expectations here at Women’s Empowerment.

**Absences & Lateness**

Volunteers are critical to Women’s Empowerment’s mission. If you cannot make your volunteer shift for whatever reason please notify our staff as soon as possible.

Volunteer can contact the following individuals:

- Michelle Adcock
  - 916-669-2307 x103
  - michelle@womens-empowerment.org

- Kara Smith
  - 916-669-2307 x121
  - kara@womens-empowerment.org

**Attendance**

Sign-in time sheets help us track your volunteer hours. Please sign in when you begin your volunteer service and sign-out when you are finished. At the Women’s Empowerment center, sign-in sheets are located at reception desk. For volunteer service outside of the Women’s Empowerment center, please work with the Volunteer Coordinator to ensure your hours are tracked properly.

**Background Checks**

Volunteers that will be working with children are required to get a criminal history background check prior to volunteering. If a criminal history is present, offenses will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis as works best for the agency.

**Confidential Information**

We have an obligation to our clients to maintain their confidentiality and respect their privacy. Every client served by Women’s Empowerment has the right to confidentiality. That being said, however, every volunteer must use his or her best judgment. If you are aware of a client issue that requires immediate help, please inform the Volunteer Coordinator.
As you work with the staff, information of a confidential matter may be shared with you. You must not share this information with anyone who does not have a professional right or need to know it. This applies to making copies of any Women’s Empowerment records, reports or documents without prior approval. Release of any confidential information to unauthorized persons can result in dismissal from your service.

**Dress Code**

Women’s Empowerment has a casual dress code, but we ask that your attire be neat and conservative. If staff feels your attire is out of place, you may be asked to change into proper attire.

**Driving**

Volunteers whose work required operation of a motor vehicle must present and maintain a valid driver's license. You will be asked to submit a copy of your driving record and automotive insurance to Women’s Empowerment from time to time.

**Equal Volunteering Opportunity**

Women’s Empowerment provides equal volunteering opportunity for everyone regardless of age, sex, color, race, creed, national origin, religious persuasion, marital status, sexual orientation, political belief, or disability that does not prohibit performance of essential job functions. All matters relating to volunteering are based upon ability to perform the job, as well as dependability and reliability.

**Exit Interviews**

In instances where a volunteer voluntarily leaves, Women’s Empowerment would like to discuss your reasons for leaving and any other impressions the volunteer may have about Women’s Empowerment. If you decide to leave, you will be asked to grant us the privilege of an exit interview. We hope that the interview will help us part friends, as well as provide insight into possible improvements. All information will be kept strictly confidential and will in no way affect any references that Women’s Empowerment will provide to another agency.

**Expense Reimbursement**

You must have the volunteer coordinator’s written authorization prior to incurring any expense on behalf of Women’s Empowerment. To be reimbursed for all authorized expenses, you must submit an expense report accompanied by receipts and approved by your Volunteer Coordinator.
Feedback

An efficient, successful operation and satisfied volunteers go hand in hand. Volunteer grievances are of concern to Women’s Empowerment, regardless of whether the problems are large or small.

In order to provide for prompt and efficient evaluation of, and response to, grievances, Women’s Empowerment has established a Feedback Procedure for all volunteers. It will always be Women’s Empowerment to give full consideration to every volunteer’s opinion. There will be no discrimination against or toward anyone for his or her part in presenting grievances.

Under this policy, a grievance is defined as any event, condition, rule, or practice which the volunteer believes violates his or her civil rights, treats him or her unfairly, or causes him or her any degree of unpleasantness or unhappiness on the job. A grievance may also deal with an attitude, a statement, or an opinion held by a manager or volunteer.

The Feedback Procedure is as follows:

1. Address your volunteer coordinator
   If you feel that any volunteering condition, policy, practice, or action by Women’s Empowerment is unjust, you should tell your volunteer coordinator about it and discuss the matter confidentially and in private with him or her. If for some reason your volunteer coordinator fails to offer you the opportunity to discuss the matter, or if the discussion does not lead to a satisfactory conclusion, then proceed to the next step.

2. Meet with the executive director
   Your volunteer coordinator’s immediate supervisor, the agency executive director, will review the grievance and ask you to meet with him or her. At this meeting, you should feel free to openly discuss your complaint and substantiate your reasons for feeling the way you do. In most cases, the matter will usually be resolved at this stage.

3. Meet with the board
   Following the meeting with our executive director, if you are still displeased with the decision rendered, you should bring the problem directly to our Board. The problem will be discussed with all concerned and a final decision rendered. The Board’s decision will be binding on all. The sole purpose of this Feedback Procedure is to give each volunteer and Women’s Empowerment a chance to clear up any problem, complaint, friction, or grievance.
Gifts, Tips, & Soliciting

Occasionally, volunteers will receive gifts from clients. In general, it is okay to accept cards and other gifts that are under $10. Be sure to use your best judgment when determining whether or not it is appropriate to accept any gift. Any questions regarding gifts should be directed to the Volunteer Coordinator.

When volunteering your time with Women’s Empowerment, we ask that you refrain from soliciting any political and religious beliefs. While some of our clients are very religious, we ask that you maintain a personal yet professional relationship with them throughout your time as a volunteer. We ask that you do not solicit your own business enterprise or any other private charities.

Identification

While volunteering with Women’s Empowerment, we ask that you wear a name badge to identify yourself as a volunteer.

Parking

Volunteers can utilize the parking lot at our office, as well as the parking along North A Street. Safety Monitors can help answer any questions regarding parking at our office.

Personal Phone Calls

In an effort to keep costs down, please keep personal phone calls to a minimum. Phone calls pertaining to your volunteer service are certainly allowed.

Resignation

While we hope both you and Women’s Empowerment will mutually benefit from your continued volunteering, we realize that it may become necessary for you to leave your job with Women’s Empowerment. If you anticipate having to resign your position with Women’s Empowerment, you are expected to notify your Volunteer Coordinator in writing as far in advance as possible and make arrangements for an exit interview.

Security

Maintaining the security of Women’s Empowerment offices is every volunteer’s responsibility. Develop habits that insure security as a matter of course. For example:

- Always keep cash properly stored. If you are aware that cash is insecurely stored, immediately inform the person responsible.
• Know the location of all alarms and fire extinguishers, and familiarize yourself with the proper procedure for using them.

• Be cautious and aware of who is in our center. Notify a staff member if you have concern over an individual in the center.

Standards of Conduct

By agreeing to volunteer with us, you have a responsibility to Women’s Empowerment and to you fellow volunteers to adhere to certain guidelines for conduct. Women’s Empowerment tried to keep rules to a minimum. The purpose of the rules is not to restrict your rights, but rather to be certain that you understand what conduct is expected and necessary. When each person is aware that he or she can fully depend upon fellow volunteers to follow the rules of conduct, then our organization will be a better place to volunteer for everyone.

Substance Abuse

Women’s Empowerment has no desire to intrude into its volunteers’ personal lives. However, both on-the-job and off-the-job involvement with any mood altering substances can have an impact on our agency and on Women’s Empowerment’s ability to achieve its objective of safety and security. Therefore, all volunteers are expected to report to the agency free of the effects of any mood altering substances.

The possession, sale, or usage of mood altering substances while volunteering is a violation of safe volunteer practices and will be subject to dismissal. Volunteers who show signs or evidence of having consumed alcohol and/or drugs will not be permitted entrance to Women’s Empowerment. Violators will be dismissed from all volunteer programs.

TB Testing

Because Women’s Empowerment works with a high-risk population, we require that our volunteers get tested annually for Tuberculosis. Results are to be submitted to the Volunteer Coordinator.

Termination Policy

Women’s Empowerment is an at-will agency and has the right to terminate a volunteer without cause, but will always consider the cause leading to the termination. In general, failure to adhere to policies of Women’s Empowerment is cause of immediate release.
Grounds for immediate dismissal may include, but are not limited to:

- Gross misconduct or insubordination
- Reporting for a volunteer assignment under the influence of alcohol or drugs
- Theft of property or misuse of agency funds, equipment or materials
- Falsifying statements on the volunteer application or during the interview process
- Illegal, violent or unsafe acts
- Abuse or mistreatment of clients, volunteers or staff
- Releasing confidential information
- Unwillingness to support and further the mission of the organization

Unacceptable Activities

Generally speaking, we expect each person to act in a mature and responsible way at all times. However, to avoid any possible confusion, some of the more obvious unacceptable activities are noted below. Your avoidance of these activities will be to your benefit as well as the benefit of Women’s Empowerment. If you have questions concerning any volunteer or safety rule, or any of the unacceptable activities listed, please see your volunteer coordinator for an explanation.

If a volunteer violates any rules established by Women’s Empowerment, including the following rules, that person may be subject to discipline up to, and including, immediate discharge.

- Willful violation of any agency rule; any deliberate action that is extreme in nature and is obviously detrimental to Women’s Empowerment.
- Willful violation of security or safety rules or failure to observe safety rules or Women’s Empowerment safety practices; failure to wear required safety equipment; tampering with Women’s Empowerment or safety equipment.
- Negligence or any careless action that endangers the life or safety of another person.
- Possession or consumption of alcoholic beverages is prohibited at any Women’s Empowerment event designed for the participation of minors.
- Possession or use of all illegal drugs or other illegal substances is prohibited.
- Excessive tardiness or absenteeism.
- Unauthorized possession of dangerous or illegal firearms, weapons or explosives on agency property or while on duty.
• Engaging in criminal conduct or acts of violence, or making threats of violence towards anyone on agency premises or when representing Women's Empowerment; fighting, or horseplay, or provoking a fight on agency property, or negligent damage of property.

• Insubordination or refusing to obey instructions properly issued by your volunteer coordinator.

• Threatening, intimidating or coercing fellow volunteers on or off the premises - at any time, for any purpose.

• Theft of agency property or the property of fellow volunteers or clients; unauthorized possession or removal of any agency property, including documents, from the premises without prior permission from management; unauthorized use of agency equipment or property for personal reasons; using agency equipment for profit.

• Dishonest, willful falsification or misrepresentation of your application for volunteering or other volunteer records; alteration of agency records or other agency documents.

• Breach of confidentiality of personnel information.

• Malicious gossip and/or spreading rumors; engaging in behavior designed to create discord and lack of harmony; interfering with another volunteer on the job; willfully restricting volunteer output or engaging others to do the same.

• Immoral conduct or indecency on agency property.
Contact Information

Listed below are the members of our leadership and volunteer team. If you have any questions, you can contact member of our lead team listed below and we will happily put you in touch with an appropriate staff member.

**Lisa Culp**  
Executive Director  
(916) 669-2307 Ext 102  
lisa@womens-empowerment.org

**Michelle Adcock**  
Operations and Volunteer Manager  
(916) 669-2307 Ext 103  
michelle@womens-empowerment.org

**Kate Towson**  
Fund Developer  
(916) 669-2307 Ext 104  
kate@womens-empowerment.org

**Kara Smith**  
Community Partnerships Coordinator  
(916) 669-2307 Ext. 121  
kara@womens-empowerment.org

**Brian Talcott**  
Program Director  
(916) 669-2307 Ext 115  
brian@womens-empowerment.org

**Women’s Empowerment Office**  
1590 North A St.  
Sacramento, CA 95811  
Phone (916) 669-2307  
Fax (916) 341-0730  
Hours: 8:30 am – 3:30 pm, Monday – Friday
Copy of Volunteer Agreement

Women’s Empowerment believes in the inherent ability of every woman to make positive changes in her life and to learn to communicate in truthful, respectful ways. Women’s Empowerment strives to create a nurturing space where women can share, grow, and heal.

In pursuit of this goal, volunteers are expected to keep all information regarding the women in our program confidential and to treat everyone with respect. If there is a situation in which you feel a staff member should be aware of a problem regarding one of the women in our program, contact the Volunteer Coordinator to determine the best possible solution. Failure to comply with these policies may result in dismissal from volunteer staff and/or civil or criminal prosecution in accordance with applicable statutes.

By signing this form, I acknowledge that I been given a copy of the Women’s Empowerment Volunteer Handbook. I understand that it summarizes Women’s Empowerment’s volunteer guidelines and expectations of me as a volunteer. I understand that volunteering with Women’s Empowerment is not for a specified term and is at the mutual consent of Women’s Empowerment and myself. I agree to abide by the Policies and Procedures laid out in the Volunteer Handbook.

By signing this form, I agree to:

- Honor my commitment to the program
- Cooperate with the WE staff and fellow volunteers
- Be prompt and reliable
- Notify the volunteer coordinator of any changes to your commitment as a volunteer
- Keep all communications with or concerning the women in our program confidential
- Maintain a respectful relationship with clients
- Model professional behavior, through both dress and decorum
- Discuss any and all issues with WE staff
- Respect each woman’s right to self determination
- Promote the safety of the women, children, staff and volunteers by adhering to all WE rules and guidelines

_________________________        ____________________________        ____________
Print Name                              Signature                        Date